

HOW TO SAVE BUSH'S SECOND TERM ■ THE PLAME GAME

NOVEMBER 21, 2005

The American Conservative

CLUB WELL FED

How Seniors Refuse to Pull Their Own Weight



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The US May Have Already Lost Its Edge In Science And Technology

The US is fast losing its edge in science and needs urgent, extensive efforts to strengthen its scientific competitiveness, according to a recent New York Times report on warnings from a top congressional advisory panel. The panel recently reported that countries like China and India are emerging as real hi-tech centers that can challenge the US hegemony in the fields of science and technology.

Unlike present-day America, these developing nations have plans, goals, and talent. There's a strong value of creativity, and local governments directly and indirectly help finance of technological activity and companies. Capital is available for technology and there are hundreds of good foreign schools filled with bright eager students to develop these new technologies.

"Thanks to globalization," the panel's report said, "workers in virtually every sector must now face competitors who live just a mouse-click away in China, India, Ireland, Finland or dozens of other nations whose economies are growing."

Panel members estimated the cost of new recommendations to maintain a critical dominant position in science and technology at \$10 billion a year. Without such improvements, the US will be simply unequipped and unprepared to compete.

The panel offered startling indicators of why decisive action is needed now, including:

- **Last year chemical companies shuttered 70 facilities in the US and have tagged 40 more for closure. Of 120 chemical plants being built around the world with price tags of \$1 billion or more, one is in the US and 50 are in China.**
- **For the cost of one chemist or one engineer in the United States, a company can hire about five chemists in China or 11 engineers in India.**
- **US 12th-graders rank below the international average for 21 countries in mathematics and science. No other country scored below the US in an advanced mathematics assessment administered to students in 15 other countries. Eleven countries outperformed the United States, and four scored similarly.**
- **In 1999 only 41 per cent of US eighth-graders had a math teacher who had majored in mathematics at the undergraduate or graduate level or studied the subject for teacher certification compared to the international average of 71 per cent.**
- **Last year more than 600,000 engineers graduated from institutions of higher education in China. In India, the figure was 350,000. In America, it was about 70,000.**
- **In 2001 US industry spent more on tort litigation than on research and development**

"America must act now to preserve its strategic and economic security by capitalizing on its knowledge-based resources, particularly in science and technology, and maintaining the most fertile environment for new and revitalized industries that create well-paying jobs." This must be accomplished soon or we must resign ourselves into becoming a weaker nation with a much lower living standard.

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ECONOMY IN CRISIS
CREATING AWARENESS OF OUR TRUE ECONOMIC CONDITION



[BUDGET]

Everyone's Entitled

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[JUSTICE]

WAR PARTY WEB

As we go to press, Washington awaits word from special prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald: who will be indicted and why for their part in the Valerie Plame case? As is so often the case, one crime is embedded in a web of others, seemingly unrelated, and pulling at one thread begins to unravel an entire scheme.

It is now public knowledge that officials in the White House and Pentagon sold their policy of invading Iraq on a tissue of falsehoods. We know that one Pentagon aide has pled guilty to passing U.S. secrets to AIPAC, Israel's lobbying agency, and to an Israeli embassy official. We know that a burglary at an embassy in Rome generated forgeries used to "document" Iraq's fanciful uranium purchases. This much has surfaced. But the whole network operating through the Bush presidency to push America into war has yet to be uncovered or fully understood. We count ourselves among the millions of Americans who hope and pray that through Fitzgerald's probe, the truth will come out.

[WAR]

WANTED: DISSENT

Few who saw it were not moved by Col. Lawrence Wilkerson's New America Foundation talk about the making of the Bush administration's Iraq policy. Wilkerson was Colin Powell's chief of staff during the run-up to the Iraq War; he saw firsthand the process whereby a small clique operating from Rumsfeld's and Cheney's offices decided what American policy would be (war) and worked to ensure that objections (from the CIA, the military, and the State Department) never got a fair hearing. Equally culpable was former national security adviser and current right-wing pet Condoleezza Rice, who never served as an arbiter between conflicting views of how best to wage the War on Terror.



Instead, in Wilkerson's telling, Rice focused on maintaining her own privileged access to the president and never failed—once a decision had been arrived at by the "Cheney-Rumsfeld cabal"—to scoot into the Oval Office and secure presidential concurrence. During this time, Wilkerson's boss Colin Powell remained the proverbial good soldier, eventually using up his own credibility in the weeks before the war in a UN Security Council presentation that turned out to be almost entirely false.

One question we wish had been asked of Wilkerson is why he did not resign. Three Foreign Service officers did resign in the weeks before the Iraq invasion, and today their analyses of the likely consequences seem prescient, their course of action honorable.

Nor should the resignation option be limited to Foreign Service officers and State Dept. appointees. The exit of a score of top-ranking military officers—aware that Bush's policies have not only soiled America's good name in the world but threaten to wreck the armed forces—might be the one lever that could pry Capitol Hill Republicans from their narrow party loyalties. Of course there are pensions at stake and the ever-present voice that counsels that one can "make a difference" by staying inside. But as administration officials—faced with indictments and deep into their own psychological bunkers—threaten

more wars, patriots in government ought to be asking what steps they can take to stop them.

[IMMIGRATION]

READ THE FINE PRINT

"White House Vows to Deport All Illegals" Fox News blared following Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff's vow to "return every single illegal entrant." But conservatives might want to hold off on popping the corks. With regrets to their fond hopes, the administration is not planning a massive deportation of illegal immigrants and is still holding the door wide for amnesty.

Note that Chertoff didn't say "aliens"—that shadow society doing the supposed "jobs Americans won't do." (He went on to endorse a guest-worker program for them.) Rather, he spoke of illegal entrants: those people caught—more often not—unlawfully entering the country. With that careful designation, he limits the pool to the roughly 1 in 100 that we manage to apprehend at the border.

Under the current catch-and-release policy, when OTMs—Other than Mexicans as they're known to immigration officials—are intercepted, they are generally turned loose and told to show up in court on a specific date. No surprise, only about 15 percent do, resulting in a gain of some 110,000 additional illegals per year—in a population of 11 million. Chertoff's plan

would see that this relatively small subset is denied admission, but those former entrants already ensconced within our borders would be unaffected.

On the upside—scant but not insignificant—implicit in the statement is an admission that the border can be policed, a departure from the defeatist arguments typically used to make the case for amnesty. Conservatives should seize on this and demand even greater enforcement rather than celebrating a clever statement designed to appease the base without delivering meaningful reform.

[TAXES]

READ HIS LIPS

After amnesty and the Harriet Miers debacle, President Bush may have found another, more surprising way to alienate conservatives: tax reform.

The president's tax-advisory commission was charged with producing a simpler, less economically destructive code. One of its challenges was the alternative minimum tax. Designed to keep millionaires with clever accountants from escaping the IRS, it wasn't indexed to inflation and is increasingly biting middle-class families, especially those located in East Coast states with steady income growth. But because spending cuts are off-limits, any reform has to be revenue-neutral—that is, it has to keep the flow of funds to the Leviathan intact. So to help families burdened by one tax, the commission may propose raising others, such as by slashing the mortgage-interest deduction limit to as little as \$300,000.

Some enterprising numbers-crunchers discovered this swap might hit Republicans particularly hard. One free-market economist described it as a tax cut for blue-staters and "a huge tax increase for middle-class folks in red states." Remind us again why big-government conservatism is a winning strategy?

[NUMBERS]

NOT THROWING FLOWERS

"We lack metrics to know if we are winning or losing the global war on terror," said Donald Rumsfeld two years ago. But we have metrics for the Iraq War—Americans killed, frequency of attacks, bullets expended. And at the end of October, data revealed how the war for Iraqis' hearts and minds is proceeding. A poll by the British military found 82 percent of Iraqis "strongly opposed" to the occupation. Forty-five percent believed violence against coalition troops was justified. And less than 1 percent thought the coalition had improved security within the country.

[POLITICS]

TOO BUSY FOR BUSH

Let's assume that a certain percentage of Republican lawmakers know the Bush presidency is turning into a train wreck: Iraq, open borders, huge deficits, indictments. When do they begin separating themselves? The issue will be nationalized next fall, when the members of the House and many senators face the voters. But the cold calculation of political survival has already begun.

In Virginia, Republican Jerry Kilgore is in a neck-and-neck governor's race against Democrat Tim Kaine. President Bush will be in the state 11 days before election day, giving a speech on "terrorism" before a military audience. This has been a standby of Bush crowd-pleasing since 9/11: the president, flags, brave young men and women, neocon rhetoric.

But guess what? Kilgore has another engagement and won't be in attendance. It's a scheduling choice that no Republican candidate would have made a year ago. Says a Kilgore aide: "People feel better about the way things are going in the state than they do about the way things are going in the country. Maybe Jerry Kilgore feels the same way." In conservative Virginia, the Bush coattails are pretty much gone. ■

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Can This Presidency Be Saved?

"I DREAMT LAST NIGHT of the three weird sisters," said Banquo, "To you they have show'd some truth." "I think not of them," replied Macbeth, lying.

For Bush the three sisters have names: Cindy, Katrina, Harriet.

As he flew off to Crawford in August, the president was riding high. His energy and transportation bills had been passed, the latter larded with pork. He had won the battle of CAFTA by one switched vote. The press had begun to concede that their previous reports of lame-duckhood may have been seriously exaggerated.

But since then, Bush has been bedeviled by the three sisters. At Crawford, it was Cindy Sheehan and an indulgent press trekking to Camp Casey to carry Cindy's antiwar message to America.

His vacation was cut short by Katrina, who did as much damage to his reputation as a leader as she did to New Orleans. Then came the nomination of Harriet Miers to fill the seat of Sandra Day O'Connor, which did for Bush's relationship with conservatives what breaking the "no new taxes" pledge in 1990 did for his father's.

As these lines are being written, reports are coming in of the 2000th U.S. soldier to die in Iraq, the White House awaits word on indictments from special prosecutor Fitzgerald, and the president's approval rating has fallen beneath 40 percent. The *New York Daily News'* Tom DeFrank describes a "frustrated, sometimes angry and even bitter" president, lashing out at aides, "a mass of contradictions: cheerful and serene, peevish and melancholy, occasionally lapsing into what he once derided as the 'blame game.'"

Bush has encountered the second-term turbulence that broke the presi-

dency of Nixon and almost brought down Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan. Are we witnessing the breaking of a presidency?

We are nowhere near that yet. But instead of cussing out aides for mistakes that are his own, George W. Bush, if he wishes to save his legacy, should call counselors—insiders and outsiders whom he trusts—to Camp David to map his way out of the storm.

Unlike Watergate, which brought down Nixon, Plamegate has yet to touch the Oval Office. Unlike Monica, there is no squalid cloud of personal scandal hovering over the president himself.

As Reagan, after six months of stumbling in the Iran-Contra affair, emerged to run up a string of successes in foreign policy that enabled him to leave office with 70 percent approval and enter the history books as the most successful president of the 20th century, Bush is not done—yet. This is not to minimize the perilous straits into which he has maneuvered himself—and his country in Iraq.

What needs to be done? Begin with basics. Repair ruptured ties to the base. Swallow hard, set aside wounded pride and the congenital Bush dislike of the Right and—to replace Miers—send up a Michael Luttig, Edith Jones, or Sam Alito, one after the other if need be, as nominees to the Supreme Court. A bench-clearing brawl with Bush leading his party and coalition in battle will hastily heal the breach. If the McCain Seven threaten not to break a Democratic filibuster, let them vote with the Democrats.

Though Bush has put at risk a legacy of having recaptured the court for constitutionalism with his two stealth nominees without paper trails, this cause is not yet lost.

Second, tell Congress to put off the guest worker program and call for tough legislation to protect the bleeding U.S. border: fences at every vulnerable crossing point, expedited deportation of arrested illegal aliens, an end to sanctuary cities, a strengthened Border Patrol, denial of all but vital social services to illegal aliens, and a national crackdown on employers who chronically hire illegal aliens.

While the president would be instantly at war with the media and corporate elites, the nation would be behind him. And there is nothing wrong with changing one's priorities when the situation has changed.

Third, support the Republican backbenchers' revolt against wastrel spending and accept across-the-board cuts to pay for the damage done by Katrina, Rita, and Wilma.

Fourth, recognize that the bottom is falling out of support for the war, announce a withdrawal of some troops, and move others into strategic enclaves where they can act swiftly to block any Tet Offensive, while turning over the bulk of the fighting to the Iraqis. Americans will not indefinitely support the present level of forces in Iraq, nor should the president increase it.

The U.S. military in Iraq may be the only force blocking an insurgent victory, but its presence in Iraq is also the reason for the insurgency. The answer is Iraqization.

Do as Nixon did, draw down U.S. forces and begin turning the war over to the Iraqis themselves. Sooner or later they will have to save, or lose, their own country and their own democracy.

Now is as good a time as any to see if they can hack it and what needs to be done if they cannot. ■

[the era of big government]

Everyone's Entitled

Rising spending and an aging population combine to create a fiscal crisis.

By Doug Bandow

FOR YEARS REPUBLICANS promised revolutionary change in Washington. But after Ronald Reagan was elected president in 1980, they complained that the GOP needed to run Congress. After Republicans gained control of Congress in 1994, they said they needed the presidency as well. Now, with both the White House and Capitol Hill under firm GOP control, Republicans have no more excuses.

Unfortunately, the budget results have been ugly, and the future looks even worse. Notes Peter Ferrara of the Free Enterprise Fund, "under current law Federal spending as a percent of GDP will rise from 20 percent today to 34 percent by 2030." That is higher than at any other point since World War II. Toss in state and local spending, and half the economy will be in government hands. And these estimates ignore the natural tendency of government outlays to climb far faster than projected.

President George W. Bush submitted a \$2.57 trillion budget for 2006. Under Republican stewardship, a \$236 billion surplus in 2000 turned into a deficit exceeding \$400 billion last year. Only higher than projected revenues will push the deficit down to an expected \$333 billion this year.

The administration's future fiscal projections are about as accurate as its WMD claims for Iraq. For instance, writes Stephen Slivinski of the Cato

Institute, "the new budget estimates assume that non-entitlement spending will be *cut* by \$36 billion between 2006 and 2009. Yet there has never been a period over the past 40 years in which such spending has dropped more than \$12.2 billion."

Moreover, noted Robert L. Bixby, executive director of the Concord Coalition, "to leave out Social Security, the AMT [alternative minimum tax], and the war costs and say you have a plan to cut the deficit in half over five years is beyondchutzpah." Including these and other Bush objectives, such as making the tax cuts permanent, "could add almost \$3 trillion more to the national debt than Bush's budget will claim," according to Howard Gleckman of *Business Week*.

Earlier this year Vice President Richard Cheney declared that the 2006 proposal was "the tightest budget that has been submitted since we got here." If true, that merely reflects the laxity of earlier submissions. The president's first term featured record-setting increases in domestic outlays, highlighted by such special-interest gifts as the \$170 billion farm bill. Overall, notes Veronique de Rugy of the American Enterprise Institute, in "the last four years, total spending has risen 33 percent—a figure larger than Clinton's two terms combined." It's the fastest domestic growth since Lyndon Johnson.

In recent months the GOP passed bloated energy and highway bills. The unexpectedly difficult Afghanistan and Iraq occupations are costing more than a billion dollars a week, and estimates for next year have jumped \$50 billion since just February.

The Medicare drug benefit—the biggest expansion of the welfare state in 40 years—is set to take effect next year. The expense, writes Derek Hunter of the Heritage Foundation, "will soon grow dramatically once roughly 70 million baby-boomers begin retiring in 2008." Over the next 75 years, the pharmaceutical program is predicted to run \$8.7 trillion—nearly a third of Medicare's current unfunded liabilities and more than Social Security's deficit. And that assumes no changes—unlikely once recipients discover that Congress created the so-called "donuthole," through which coverage disappears at mid-expenditure levels.

Indeed, the drug benefit illustrates the real federal financial crisis—programs devoted to America's elderly. The Cato Institute's Chris Edwards warns, "The federal government is headed toward a financial crisis as a result of chronic overspending, large deficits, and huge future cost increases in Social Security and Medicare."

Over the long term, Social Security and Medicare are the true budget busters—accounting for \$518 billion

and \$290 billion in outlays, respectively, in 2005. Together they account for almost one-third of federal spending.

Medicaid is another budget boulder, running \$192 billion this year. Medicaid is directed at the poor and has become politicians' favorite mechanism for attempting to expand government health-care coverage. Nevertheless, one-quarter of its payments go to the elderly. Medicaid's costs also are affected by the aging of America, though not as dramatically as are Social Security's and Medicare's.

Although Social Security currently outspends Medicare, the latter is the bigger long-term problem. Its financial outlook is "much worse than Social Security's," declared the Social Security and Medicare trustees earlier this year. Medicare is tied to fast-rising medical costs rather than wage hikes. By 2024, Medicare outlays are expected to exceed those for Social Security; left unchanged, Medicare will spend twice as much as Social Security by 2078. Douglas Holtz-Eakin, director of the Congressional Budget Office, warns that the growth in Medicare is "simply unsustainable."

Even these estimates understate likely outlays. Notes Cato's Michael Cannon, "there is constant pressure to expand Medicare benefits—from seniors, healthcare interest groups, and advocates of socialized medicine. Recent examples include the new prescription drug benefit, as well as coverage for preventive screening, obesity, and quit-smoking programs that President Bush added by fiat."

Social Security and Medicare are disastrously unbalanced for three reasons.

First, "contributions" to Social Security and Medicare are insufficient to provide promised benefits. Both of these programs are primarily funded by taxes on the rest of the population.

Second is demographics. Explains James C. Capretta, Managing Director at Wexler and Walker Public Policy

Associates, "First, life expectancy for persons at age 65 has increased dramatically. ... Second, the fertility rate fell precipitously in a very short period of time," more than 50 percent between 1960 and 1975. Pay-as-you-go Ponzi schemes can survive only so long as sufficient numbers of new suckers enter the system. By 2030 the number of people 65 and older will almost double while the number of workers paying for the programs will rise by just 18 percent. Whereas dozens of workers once supported every Social Security beneficiary, that ratio is now 3.3-to-1 and will fall to 2.2-to-1 by 2030, from which it will continue slowly to decline.

Health-care costs rise dramatically with age. Notes Holtz-Eakin, "the steady increase in the number of the oldest seniors (those age 85 and older)—from 1.5 percent of the population in 2000 to 5.0 percent in 2040—is projected to lead to a rise in the demand for long-term care services, including those paid for by Medicaid and Medicare." At the same

decade and the necessary supplement rises to \$761 billion.

Worst is tomorrow's bill. Writes Chris Edwards, "In addition to today's federal public debt of \$3.9 trillion, taxpayers may be on the hook for \$2.9 trillion in federal employee retirement benefits, \$1 trillion in veterans' benefits, \$3.6 trillion in Social Security benefits, \$15.6 trillion in Medicare benefits, and \$7 trillion in the new Medicare drug benefits." But Edwards's figures merely run for 75 years. (Forget claims about accumulated assets in the Social Security and Health Insurance "trust funds," which are accounting fictions filled with special, non-marketable Treasury bonds.)

The 2005 annual report of the Board of Trustees of Social Security and Medicare notes, "Even a 75-year period is not long enough to provide a complete picture of Social Security's financial condition." Similarly, Jagadeesh Gokhale, formerly of the American Enterprise Institute, and Kent Smetters, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, warn

BY 2030, THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE 65 AND OLDER WILL ALMOST DOUBLE WHILE THE NUMBER OF WORKERS PAYING FOR THE PROGRAMS WILL RISE BY JUST 18 PERCENT.

time, declining fertility means there will be fewer family members to provide informal, non-government assistance.

The third factor is the "relentless growth in federal, and private, health spending per capita above income growth," explains Capretta. Over the last 35 years, Medicare outlays have risen 3 percent annually above the increase in per capita GDP.

John Goodman, president of the National Center for Policy Analysis, calls even the short-term estimates "sobering." Just five years from now, he writes, "the federal government will need \$127 billion in additional funds to pay promised benefits." Add another

that traditional fiscal measures are inadequate: "As a consequence, the degree to which current policy is unsustainable remains hidden from policymakers." They propose a measure of Fiscal Imbalance (FI) with an infinite time horizon. Their 2003 FI estimate was \$44.2 trillion. Social Security ran \$7 trillion and Medicare accounted for \$36.6 trillion. The rest of the federal government ran just \$0.5 trillion.

The FI worsens over time. It "grows by about \$1.6 trillion per year to about \$54 trillion by just 2008 unless corrective policies are implemented before then," explain Gokhale and Smetters. Long-term estimates obviously are sensitive to

economic assumptions: the FI could run “only” \$29 trillion if we are lucky or \$64 trillion if things go less well.

The government’s estimates, based on more pessimistic economic assumptions, are even more forbidding. The Social Security and Medicare trustees estimate the full unfunded liability for Social Security to be \$11.1 trillion. Medicare’s unfunded hospital and medical-insurance liability runs a shocking \$49.9 trillion. And the new drug benefit, which had not been passed when Gokhale and Smetter completed their analysis, adds another \$18.2 trillion. The total: \$79.2 trillion.

By way of comparison, the federal government spends about \$2.6 trillion a year, the entire public debt is \$4.6 trillion, America’s annual GDP is about \$12 trillion, and Americans’ total personal financial net worth is around \$35 trillion.

No surprise, the longer we wait to act, the more difficult it becomes to close the gap. Since reforms are hardest to apply to those who have already retired, “Delaying action until the baby boom is in full retirement insures that the next generation will bear the burden of current inaction,” argue Andrew J. Rettenmaier and Thomas R. Saving, for the Private Enterprise Research Center at Texas A&M University.

The Congressional Budget Office figures that under intermediate program assumptions, federal outlays on Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid will climb from 9 percent of GDP in 2010 to 17.7 percent in 2050. The more realistic “pessimistic” assumptions generate respective forecasts of 9.5 percent and 27.6 percent—more than one of every four dollars generated by the entire economy. And that doesn’t include spending on the military, all other federal activities, and states and localities.

In May, Comptroller General David M. Walker warned, “The only thing the United States is able to do a little after

2040 is pay interest on massive and growing federal debt. The model blows up in the mid-2040s. What does that mean? Argentina.”

The problem is not just that the elderly will be collecting so much in “entitlements.” The programs, as well as their means of financing, have adverse consequences. For instance, argues Martin Feldstein of the National Bureau of Economic Research, “Retirement pensions induce earlier retirement and depress saving.” Payroll taxes act as a direct levy on employment, discouraging job creation. These programs also make Americans ever more dependent on government.

Obviously, many elderly believe that they are entitled to their benefits. *New York Times* columnist Nicholas D. Kristof makes an important if exaggerated point: “We boomers won’t be remembered as the ‘Greatest Generation.’ Rather, we’ll be scorned as the ‘Greedy Generation.’”

Although titled “social insurance,” none of these programs operate as such. Given low tax rates in the past, many beneficiaries received back their lifetime Social Security “contribution” in months rather than years. Medicare makes no pretense of forcing retirees to fund their own benefits. Taxes pay the entire Part A (hospital insurance) and roughly three-quarters of Medicare Part B (supplemental medical insurance) and Part D (the upcoming pharmaceutical benefit).

What to do? Policy analyst James Capretta offers a half-dozen principles to guide reform efforts.

First, entitlements should be provided with the least taxpayer burden. As he notes, “the payroll tax rates would need to be raised from 15.3 percent today to 20.3 percent immediately—a 33 percent tax increase—to close the 75-year actuarial deficits in the trust funds, and even then large deficits would

emerge in both programs by the end of the solvency measurement time frame.”

Laurence Kotlikoff, Hans Fehr, and Sabine Jokisch of the National Center for Policy Analysis figure that funding all promised benefits would require sharp payroll and income tax hikes: “the total tax on wages will rise from 24 percent to 38 percent by 2030 and 40 percent by mid-century.” A more pessimistic analysis comes from former Commerce Secretary Peter G. Peterson, who figures that payroll taxes would ultimately have to run 56.7 percent to fund currently promised Social Security and Medicare benefits. Relying instead on income tax payments would require devoting 76 percent of that levy to close the Social Security/Medicare deficit in 2050. Such hikes would, in turn, have significant economic and social impacts.

Second, benefits to current recipients shouldn’t be reduced since “these retirees have limited ability to adjust their consumption and work behavior based on changing government policy.”

Indeed, many citizens have not provided for their own medical and retirement needs. Seniors overwhelmingly rely on Medicare for health-care coverage and up to a quarter of baby boomers are thought to have saved little for their retirement. The fact that people have adapted their behavior to the government’s irresponsible promises is an important consideration, but those benefits were no more guaranteed than welfare payments. The fact that beneficiaries may not have time to make up any reduction should not trump the interest of workers, who are being unfairly taxed to provide disproportionately generous benefits.

Gokhale and Smetters note that “past and living generations are projected to receive \$8.8 trillion more in benefits than they will contribute in payroll taxes,” but “future generations are projected to pay \$1.7 trillion more in taxes than they will receive in benefits.”

Taxing future generations even more to pay for current benefits would exacerbate the unfairness. But Gokhale and Smetters figure that meeting the shortfall solely through benefit cuts would require reductions approaching 60 percent. Political considerations dictate some degree of protection for current beneficiaries, lest the perfect, unattainable reform become the enemy of the good, achievable one.

Third, reforms should prolong work and delay retirement. More work reduces the need for government income support, while later retirement reduces program expenditures. Government could increase the retirement age and the financial penalty for early retirement. Longer life expectancies make this principle a matter of justice as well

Fifth, entitlement programs should be reshaped, shifting benefits from higher- to lower-income retirees. The moral imperative is to care for those least able to care for themselves, not the wealthy or even the middle-class, whose members are able to save. Full means-testing is intellectually appropriate if politically suspect, though Canada and Great Britain incorporate means-testing in their policies. Another possibility would be to end benefits for those at the highest income levels. A simpler step is that proposed by President George W. Bush, to slow cost-of-living increases for higher-income Social Security recipients.

One could adopt similar restrictions for Medicare beneficiaries. In particular, the pharmaceutical benefit should be replaced with modest income support

This would not be easy. The Free Enterprise Fund's Peter Ferrara warns, "Medicare is the most difficult to reform because benefits have been so wildly overpromised it is impossible to reform the system in a purely populist way where everyone is clearly better off." Ferrara proposes diverting both the employee's and employer's 2.9 percent Medicare tax to personal accounts for purchasing health insurance in retirement. Subsidies, financed through general revenues, could be provided to low-income people.

Capretta suggests turning Medicare benefits into insurance premium subsidies, as well as taking steps to encourage cost-containment in Medicaid and private health-care provision. Feldstein proposes a related plan: "A mixed financing system for Medicare could combine a tax-financed Medicare annuity for retirees geared to the then-current cost of health care plus an opportunity for individuals during their working years to accumulate funds in Retirement Health Savings Accounts." This money would be used to purchase a private health-insurance policy.

Medical costs need to be fixed more generally. Treasury Secretary John W. Snow argued in March, "Controlling health care costs is the real key to the long run fiscal sustainability of both Medicare and in turn the federal budget." Tort reform, disease management, preventive care, and a host of other steps would help trim health-care outlays. The most important problem, driven by a third-party payment system resulting from high federal medical expenditures and preferential tax treatment of health insurance, is the creation of a system of cost-plus medicine. Fixing that requires significant changes in the form of government health-care benefits and tax treatment of insurance.

Other nations face similar challenges. Reporting on Europe, Gary Burtless

ALLOWING PEOPLE **VOLUNTARILY TO OPT OUT OF SOCIAL SECURITY** WOULD ULTIMATELY **REDUCE PROGRAM OUTLAYS**. **ROUGHLY 30 NATIONS** HAVE SOME SUCH PROGRAM.

as practicality, since when Social Security was created many people died before collecting their first check—the life expectancy of men has risen by 3.9 years; women's has risen 5.5 years.

Fourth, incentives should be increased for private retirement savings. Over the last two decades assets in retirement accounts have jumped from \$1.5 trillion to \$6.5 trillion. Creating private Social Security accounts is the most obvious step to take. Full privatization would be even better. Allowing people voluntarily to opt out of Social Security would ultimately reduce program outlays. Roughly 30 nations have some such program. Martin Feldstein figures that even partial substitution of private retirement accounts "would eliminate the need for a future increase in the Social Security payroll tax." Expanded IRAs are another option, should Social Security reform prove impossible.

for low-income people unable to buy needed pharmaceuticals. Over the longer term, prescription benefits should be integrated into a market-oriented reform plan for Medicare that offers competing insurance options. Alas, here, as in so many areas, President Bush is proving to be a barrier to responsible policy. In February, he threatened Congress: "any attempt to limit the choices of our seniors and to take away their prescription drug coverage under Medicare will meet my veto."

Sixth, reform health-care benefits "to rely as much as possible on market-based efficiency, with similar reforms instituted simultaneously in the private sector health system." The use of Health Savings Accounts, with large deductibles, offers a blueprint for returning health insurance to its function as true insurance, rather than prepayment of medical expenses.

observes, "With respect to pension policy, national governments have increased contribution rates to the public programs, overhauled pension schedules to reduce promised future benefits, and introduced new features in public pension and old-age unemployment programs to encourage employment after the early or standard retirement age."

Capretta's ideas offer a good starting point for entitlement reform. He admits that "given the political difficulty of making far-reaching entitlement changes, closing the entire fiscal gap in one or two legislative steps is not a realistic possibility."

Work needs to proceed as soon as possible at all levels, to adopt reforms where possible and to help change attitudes where not. But even today reform won't be easy. It is difficult enough to discuss Social Security. Opines Rep. Kevin Brady (R-Texas), "A good Medicare solution is more difficult than the war on terrorism, education, Social Security and homeland security combined."

In theory, the Bush administration and Congress recognize the seriousness of the elder budget tsunami facing the U.S. However, those unwilling to spend responsibly today are unlikely to legislate responsibly for tomorrow. Rep. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) tartly observes, "Republicans don't even pretend any more."

As a result, the parties are largely indistinguishable on fiscal grounds: both refuse to confront the looming budgetary crisis resulting from the intersection of senior benefits promised by wildly irresponsible politicians and growing numbers of seniors created by dramatic demographic changes. Alas, the longer lawmakers dither, the greater the financial problems will become. ■

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The Old Country

The unsustainable demographics of the welfare state

By Pavel Kohout

IN THE THIRD CENTURY, a prophet called Mani preached a doctrine of conflict between Good and Evil and saw the material world as the devil's creation. Marriage and having children were grave sins, in his view, since by bearing children people multiply the works of Satan. The ideal was to move mankind to a superterrestrial realm of Good by way of gradual extinction.

In the course of history, Manichaeism was eradicated as a heretical doctrine. But looking at demographic statistics, one might think that the populations in European countries have converted in masses. The birthrate in most Western European countries has fallen well below replacement level.

In the so-called New Europe, the situation is even gloomier. According to UN projections, Latvia will lose 44 percent of its population by 2050. In Estonia, the population is expected to shrink by 52 percent; in Bulgaria, by 36 percent; in Ukraine, by 35 percent; and in Russia, by 30 percent. In comparison, the projected population declines in Italy (22 percent), the Czech Republic (17 percent), Poland (15 percent), and Slovakia (8 percent) are small. France and Germany will lose relatively little population, and the population of the United Kingdom will even see a slight growth due to immigration.

Both demographers and economists have been addressing the question of why the birthrate has been falling so dramatically in continental Europe. The answer lies in several important factors, nevertheless it can be said with a fair amount of certainty that the

intergenerational wealth redistributions caused by the West's pay-as-you-go pension systems has had a very negative impact. In August 2004, the Czech Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs stated:

In terms of intergenerational solidarity, the importance of the child as an investment for material support in old age has been limited by the social security and pension insurance system, which has eliminated people's immediate dependence on children. The importance of the child's role in relation to its parents has transferred to the emotional sphere, which has reduced the direct material indispensability of children in a family ...

In Czech, the word *vejminek* (a place in a farmhouse reserved for the farmer's parents) is actually derived from a verb meaning "to stipulate": in the deed of transfer, the old farmer stipulated the conditions under which the farm was to be transferred to his son. Instead of an intergenerational policy, there used to be direct dependence of parents on their children. People had immediate economic incentives to have numerous offspring and rear them well, whereas today's anonymous pension system makes all workers pay for all retirees in an utterly depersonalized manner.

This system enables huge numbers of "free-riders" to receive more than their contribution in their productive life. Those with incomes well above the average are penalized, as the system gives them less money than they contribute.

This discourages both low- and high-income groups from having children. The latter feel that they are not going to need children in their old age, while the former believe that they cannot afford to have them.

In July 2003, a reader of the *Wall Street Journal* wrote in a letter:

My father was a Pittsburgh steel mill worker. I was born at the end of World War II. I have three sisters. Our mother never went to work. After the experience of the Great Depression, our parents were reluctant to borrow money; yet they could afford to own a house, and our father used to buy a new car once every three or four years. My parents paid for my university education and bought me my first car when I was twenty. We were by all standards part of the middle class, and I was proud of my parents' achievement. ... Today both my parents have to go to work in order to maintain a middle-class living standard, due to the increase in taxation that has occurred in the past half-century. ...

EUROPE HAS NOT SEEN SUCH AN EXTENSIVE POPULATION DECLINE SINCE THE BLACK DEATH IN THE 14TH CENTURY.

The tax burden in the United States has indeed grown significantly over the past 50 years. The birthrate has fallen proportionately—almost to the replacement level of two children per woman. But compared to Europe, the United States still appears to be a confirmed and stable superpower. Even allowing for immigration, “the population of the original EU-12 will fall by 7.5 million over the next 45 years, according to UN calculations,” writes British historian Niall Ferguson. Europe has not seen

such an extensive population decline since the Black Death in the 14th century, he notes.

In Italy, the birthrate has fallen to 1.2 children per woman. A journalist from the *Daily Telegraph* describes the life of young Italians:

While in the Anglo-Saxon world most adults expect to be able to live independently off their salaries, in Italy most don't. They stay with their families. Indeed, a staggering 70 percent of single Italian men between the ages of 25 and 29 live in subsidized comfort at home, where their meager earnings do very nicely as pocket money.

A young European who has to choose between setting up a family and living a comfortable, child-free life is very likely to pick the latter—unless he or she belongs to a social class that regards children chiefly as a source of social benefits.

The traditional model emphasizes the successive steps in setting up a family. First, a young person graduates from college or a vocational school; then he or she secures a living. This is followed

But there is another problem. Income and social security taxes have increased, while investments in capital equipment have been made tax-advantageous. Government support for existing families comes at the cost of a heavier tax burden for young people who have not yet started families. “Support for families” thus hinders the creation of new families and effectively reduces the birthrate.

One might be tempted to think that Scandinavian welfare states have solved the problem: fertility rates in Denmark and Sweden are 1.75 and 1.64, respectively, according to 2004 statistics—still below replacement level but very good by European standards. However, it is worth noting what is behind these figures. Den Danske Forening (the Danish Society) claims

It is estimated that the fertility among ethnic Danes is a mere 1.4, and that the difference between the official Danish fertility of 1.74 and the estimated fertility for ethnic Danes is made up of a higher fertility for immigrants amounting to 2.75 times that of ethnic Danes. This means that the immigrant population is growing at a rate six times that of ethnic Danes. Ethnic Danes' percentage of the total population is eroded a further 0.7 percent yearly, and even with a complete stop to all immigration, third-world immigrants and their descendants will be in the majority in 2039.

While some accuse the Danish Society of being xenophobic and racist, no one disputes its figures. And the same engine that boosts Denmark's total fertility rate works in Sweden, too: “Of 9 million Swedes, roughly 1,080,000 are foreign-born. There are between 800,000 and 900,000 children of immigrants, between 60,000 and 100,000 illegal immigrants, and 40,000 more asylum-seekers awaiting clearance.” The total fertility rate

among ethnic Swedes is 1.2–1.3. Immigrants make up 22 percent of all Swedish women of childbearing age. Assuming a fertility rate of three children per woman—a conservative estimate based on reproduction rates in their countries of origin—the resulting fertility rate for Sweden of 1.64 may be correct.

Interestingly, France is enjoying a baby boomlet, with a total fertility rate approaching 1.9. But the ethnic composition of newborns is literally a *secret d'état*: everybody is French, the law says, with no distinctions. Racial and religious equality is a great democratic concept, but demonstrators for girls' veils in classrooms certainly have a different worldview.

Some believe that there is nothing wrong with a low birthrate, as the planet is at any rate overpopulated. True, one cannot set the “correct” number for the population of a country or a continent.

PUBLIC PENSION SYSTEMS HAVE ERODED TRADITIONAL FAMILY TIES. PEOPLE RELY ON GOVERNMENT IN THEIR OLD AGE RATHER THAN ON THEIR CHILDREN.

What we can determine is that in a few decades a large part of Europe will be dominated by a very unfavorable age structure. It is not yet clear at what age today's young people and children will retire—if they retire at all. But the pay-as-you-go pension systems will inevitably suffer a severe crisis, and its results can be assessed today.

The most recent Actuarial Report on Social Insurance produced by the Czech Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs suggests, “the gradual raising of the age limit for the eligibility for old-age pension could substantially eliminate the impact of the expected aging of the Czech population. It is also clear that freezing this age limit would lead to a sharp growth in the ratio of elderly dependency.”

Translated into simple language, this means that retirement age will have to be constantly raised. A pay-as-you-go system may work for another few decades but will then be gradually marginalized by the rise in retirement age. Today's children will witness the failure of the pay-as-you-go political and economic experiment. But perhaps we will just return to the patterns of Bismarck's Germany in the 1880s, when the retirement age was 70 years while average life expectancy was less than 50 years. If by the year 2050 the official retirement age is raised to 90 and the average life expectancy remains around 80, then the pay-as-you-go system could be sustainable in the long term. But adequate social security at age 60 will be completely out of the question.

On the other hand, if the retirement age remains unchanged, the tax burden could eventually rise to 70–75 percent of gross wages. In such a case, the younger

and more educated portion of the working-age population would undoubtedly migrate to countries with lower taxes.

But the most important hazard of the pay-as-you-go system is not financial, as economists Isaac Ehrlich and Jinyoung Kim have demonstrated. The very principle of the pay-as-you-go system adversely affects the demographic structure, the rate of private savings, and long-term economic growth. The flaw is not in the system's parameters, but in its fundamental nature.

The demographic crisis, which endangers all pay-as-you-go systems to some extent, has not come out of the clear blue sky. It's a direct consequence of how pay-as-you-go pension systems work. Ehrlich and Kim illustrate this

assertion on data collected from 57 countries over the years 1960–92:

We find that pay-as-you-go tax measures account for a sizeable part of the downward trends in family formation and fertility worldwide, and for a slowdown in the rates of savings and economic growth, especially in OECD [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development] countries. ... Our analysis suggests that the expanded scale of the pay-as-you-go system over the last century has contributed to the diminished importance of intergenerational transfers going from children to old parents—the traditional family security system.

Public pension systems have eroded traditional family ties. Children can live without their parents, and people who might become parents can live childless. People rely on government in their old age rather than on their children.

Researchers Michele Boldrin, Mariacristina De Nardi, and Larry Jones came to the same conclusion: “The data show that an increase in government-provided old-age pensions is strongly correlated with a reduction in fertility.” The effect is massive enough to explain 80 percent of the observed differences in birthrate across countries. The empirical results also support the hypothesis that in Western civilization, parents' choice concerning number of children is not primarily driven by cultural or religious habits. (This is different for non-Western, particularly Islamic, countries.)

An old Czech story, “Three Pence,” tells about a peasant who earns three pence a day. He spends one penny, lends another penny to his son, and pays his debt to his father with the third penny. That's the way society worked until the

government stepped in. The anonymous machine of government-run pension systems has destroyed the traditional patterns of family life. Human capital is the engine of growth, and family choices affect human capital formation.

Low birthrate results in lower GDP growth. Resources of the pension system slowly dry up. Attempts to raise the social-security tax rate may result in expensive labor, and thereby lower demand for it—creating high unemployment. The vicious cycle is completed.

There is only one way to moderate the impending crisis: minimize the total value of pensions paid by the government. This may sound harsh, but low government-paid pensions do not mean that pensioners must starve or do without health care. In Iceland, old-age pensioners are paid flat pensions by the government. The total value of the Icelandic pay-as-you-go system does not exceed 7 percent of GDP, versus 12 percent in Italy. The total fertility rate in Iceland is

All citizens, parents or childless, pay a certain total amount of taxes. If some group receives a benefit, the other group is penalized (putting aside pro-growth Laffer-curve effects, as long as we are speaking about payroll taxes). What happens if the tax burden for families with children is cut at the expense of the childless? We can expect only a small increase in the fertility rate among families with children. If you already have two children, would you be likely to have another just because of a tax advantage? Generally tax stimuli are not a significant factor in family planning.

However, there would be a more significant impact on the fertility rate within the group of people who do not yet have children. People normally marry and procreate only after they have achieved a certain level of financial strength and independence. This has been the age-old norm for human behavior, with the exception of welfare-dependent classes for whom child benefits constitute a

career obstacles for unmarried men were officially introduced, mainly in government administration.

Exactly as the theory outlined above would predict, the birthrate fell between 1927 and 1934. So did the number of marriages. Not surprisingly, the average age of marrying couples increased. But Mussolini never admitted that the Battle for Births was a failure. He decorated mothers of numerous children and organized propagandist celebrations.

Ironically, the Italian population did eventually achieve the desirable number of 60 million, after World War II, when family support policies were replaced by a free-market economy. This was so successful that Italy joined the ranks of the G-7, the seven most developed countries in the world.

But this is no happy ending. Since the 1970s, the tax burden imposed on unmarried Italians has come to exceed that of the Mussolini era. This time, they are being taxed to support the welfare state. Birth and marriage rates have declined accordingly. There are more than 60 million Italians today, but with the total fertility rate of 1.2 children per woman, it looks like only a matter of decades for this number to fall back to the 1920s level. Of course, the shores of North Africa are not very remote.

According to Amsterdam statistics, in 2002 the most common first name given there to newborn babies was Mohamed. The name Osama finished at a handsome 12th place. In the 1960s, there were only 350,000 North African Muslims living in France, with some 1.25 million French living in the North Africa. Now the number of Muslims of African or Middle Eastern origin in France is estimated at 4–10 million. French census-takers are not allowed to collect information on ethnicity or religion. Nevertheless, some estimates suggest that one in three births in France occurs in a Muslim family.

ACCORDING TO AMSTERDAM STATISTICS, IN 2002 THE MOST COMMON FIRST NAME GIVEN THERE TO NEWBORN BABIES WAS MOHAMED.

1.9 children per woman, versus 1.2 in Italy. Is Iceland a poor country? No, it's more than 20 percent wealthier than Germany.

Among the proposals to fix the pay-as-you-go pension system are ideas to promote having children via both tax advantages and tax penalties. One such proposal would have parents with children pay lower social-security payroll taxes. The childless or unmarried would be penalized. But this idea is deeply and dangerously flawed. Let's not discuss "details" such as its injustice towards infertile couples. The proposal is not only ineffective; it would most likely have exactly the opposite effect from what is intended.

major part of their income. Imposing tax penalties for the unmarried might delay procreation by several years, thus cutting the marginal fertility rate.

In 1927, Benito Mussolini launched a program called the "Battle for Births." Mussolini believed that Italy had fewer people than it needed in order to play the part of a major world power. By the beginning of the 1920s, Italy had 37 million citizens. *Il Duce* set the goal of 60 million by 1950 and introduced generous benefits, especially for families with multiple children. Fathers of six or more paid no taxes at all. Of course, tax penalties for the unmarried were introduced, too. Abortions were outlawed, and contraception was hard to obtain. Later,

The international demographic context will see huge changes by 2050. By then, Yemen's population will be larger than Germany's, and Yemen's people will understandably long for the standard of living that prevails in Europe. The immigration pressure on Europe will be immense. Given liberal European laws on family reunification, the exodus from the Middle East and North Africa will indeed have monstrous repercussions.

Instead of integration of immigrants into a majority European society, the opposite will occur: the immigrants will integrate the existing European culture into their own civilization. One does not have to be a supporter of Jean-Marie Le Pen to feel somewhat anxious. This is not a problem of ethnicity, but a matter of society, its values, and democracy.

Radical preachers of fundamentalist Islam openly condemn democracy and interpret it not as a social system but as a pagan cult, which prefers the voices of people to the voice of God. This is proclaimed in many mosques throughout Europe. Thus the problem is not that a large percentage of future Europeans will have dark skin and go to mosque. The problem, and tragedy, is that Europe's tradition of democracy and tolerance may be threatened.

The Czech daily *Lidové Noviny* recently published the opinion of an Albanian student in the Czech Republic who identified herself as Adriana:

I think that family ties are not very strong here. ... The divorce rate is nearly 50 percent. Czechs like to criticize the Islamic family model, in which family members must obey the father. But I wish you could experience the feeling of family cohesion. Besides, it's not true that our women are restricted in their rights. A woman has security—she can be sure her husband won't leave her just because she

In spite of regulations requiring that foreign broadcasters only be hired by Voice of America

if there is no qualified American available, Avi Davidi, an Israeli national of Iranian descent, has been hired by the Persian service. The Persian service broadcasts in Farsi and English and is intended to reach the Iranian audience. Davidi moderates a talk program called "Looking Ahead." His appointment came about when American Enterprise Institute alumnus Seth Cropsey, Bush White House appointee as head of the International Board of Broadcasters, intervened in the selection process and vetoed the hiring of Poopak Taati, an American journalist who had been selected by VOA management. Davidi believes in "fair and balanced" reporting, so much so that he has interviewed Richard Perle twice as well as Elizabeth Cheney. He also features other neoconservatives from the American Enterprise Institute and the Project for the New American Century who voice their grievances against Tehran and occasionally call for a military strike. Davidi has also been promoting a recent book by Jerome Corsi called *Atomic Iran: How the Terrorist Regime Bought the Bomb and American Politicians*. VOA, which once enjoyed a hard-won reputation for objectivity, has an in-house review process to make sure that reporting is balanced. When the review of "Looking Ahead" started, it was clear that there would be problems. Senior managers at VOA responded by calling off the review, reprimanding the reviewer, and outsourcing the process to a consultant who has yet to be named.



In intelligence circles, "blowback" is the unintended consequences that come out of high-risk operations.

The empowerment of Osama bin Laden was, for example, blowback from U.S. involvement against Russia in Afghanistan. The British government has recently suffered its own case of blowback in Iraq. A Ministry of Defense investigation has determined that a series of recent bombing attacks against UK troops in Iraq was carried out using sophisticated devices that were triggered by infrared beams. The triggering devices employ technology developed by the Irish Republican Army for its attacks against the British in Northern Ireland. Ironically, the actual infrared technology that is key to the bomb's success was given to the Irish separatists in a badly botched sting operation that took place more than a decade ago. It was hoped at the time that using the sophisticated technology as bait would lead to a series of arrests of top IRA leaders. The operation was not successful, and the technology was lost to the terrorists. The British government of Prime Minister Tony Blair now believes that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard was able to obtain the technology from the IRA and has now passed it on to the Iraqi insurgency, yet another indicator, if true, of how terrorist groups support each other and communicate. At least eight British soldiers have been killed using the devices, leading to the recent joint UK-U.S. declaration that Iran is directly supporting the Iraqi insurgency. The bomb uses a command wire, a radio trigger, and an infrared beam for targeting, which enable the device to be set up to explode from a long distance, permitting the bombers to escape.

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loses her sex appeal, unlike a Czech woman, who is under constant pressure. She has to be successful at work, take care of the household, and she's supposed to look like a model. When I debated this with a Czech girl, she argued that our women are forced to bear more children. It's true that a woman's value grows with the number of children she has. However, it's naturally a woman's desire to have children, and women want to have as many children as possible. Usually, it's the wife who tries to convince her husband to have a family.

This patriarchal lifestyle seems hard to understand now, but it was widespread in Europe only a few decades ago. I'm hardly preaching the virtues of the patriarchal family model, since I don't practice it myself. Yet the fact remains that one day in the not-so-distant future, today's young childless-by-choice men and women will be old men and women living in underfunded communities for the elderly, without children or grandchildren to visit and advocate for them. The fortunate will have formed family-like relationships with younger, non-family friends, but others will be left on their own.

Maybe modern Islamic civilization has more in common with the traditional Western world than we generally think. In terms of family life, the main difference is only about half a century. Adriana is no sworn enemy of democracy. Rather, she possesses a set of values and preferences that differs from what is considered normal and around which policy is made in today's Europe. But are we so sure that modern Europe and its social policies are indeed normal? ■

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Forging the Case for War

Who was behind the Niger uranium documents?

By Philip Giraldi

FROM THE BEGINNING, there has been little doubt in the intelligence community that the outing of CIA officer Valerie Plame was part of a bigger story. That she was exposed in an attempt to discredit her husband, former ambassador Joseph Wilson, is clear, but the drive to demonize Wilson cannot reasonably be attributed only to revenge. Rather, her identification likely grew out of an attempt to cover up the forging of documents alleging that Iraq attempted to buy yellowcake uranium from Niger.

What took place and why will not be known with any certainty until the details of the Fitzgerald investigation are revealed. (As we go to press, Fitzgerald has made no public statement.) But recent revelations in the Italian press, most notably in the pages of *La Repubblica*, along with information already on the public record, suggest a plausible scenario for the evolution of Plamegate.

Information developed by Italian investigators indicates that the documents were produced in Italy with the connivance of the Italian intelligence service. It also reveals that the introduction of the documents into the American intelligence stream was facilitated by Undersecretary of Defense Doug Feith's Office of Special Plans (OSP), a parallel intelligence center set up in the Pentagon to develop alternative sources of information in support of war against Iraq.

The first suggestion that Iraq was seeking yellowcake uranium to construct a nuclear weapon came on Oct. 15, 2001, shortly after 9/11, when Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and his newly appointed chief of the *Servizio*

per le Informazioni e la Sicurezza Militare (SISMI), Nicolo Pollari, made an official visit to Washington. Berlusconi was eager to make a good impression and signaled his willingness to support the American effort to implicate Saddam Hussein in 9/11. Pollari, in his position for less than three weeks, was likewise keen to establish himself with his American counterparts and was under pressure from Berlusconi to present the U.S. with information that would be vital to the rapidly accelerating War on Terror. Well aware of the Bush administration's obsession with Iraq, Pollari used his meeting with top CIA officials to provide a SISMI dossier indicating that Iraq had sought to buy uranium in Niger. The same intelligence was passed simultaneously to Britain's MI-6.

But the Italian information was inconclusive and old, some of it dating from the 1980s. The British, the CIA, and the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research analyzed the intelligence and declared that it was "lacking in detail" and "very limited" in scope.

In February 2002, Pollari and Berlusconi resubmitted their report to Washington with some embellishments, resulting in Joe Wilson's trip to Niger. Wilson visited Niamey in February 2002 and subsequently reported to the CIA that the information could not be confirmed.

Enter Michael Ledeen, the Office of Special Plans' man in Rome. Ledeen was paid \$30,000 by the Italian Ministry of the Interior in 1978 for a report on terrorism and was well known to senior SISMI officials. Italian sources indicate that Pollari was eager to engage with the

Pentagon hardliners, knowing they were at odds with the CIA and the State Department officials who had slighted him. He turned to Ledeen, who quickly established himself as the liaison between SISMI and Feith's OSP, where he was a consultant. Ledeen, who had personal access to the National Security Council's Condoleezza Rice and Stephen Hadley and was also a confidant of Vice President Cheney, was well placed to circumvent the obstruction coming from the CIA and State.

The timing, August 2002, was also propitious as the administration was intensifying its efforts to make the case for war. In the same month, the White House Iraq Group (WHIG) was set up to market the war by providing information to friends in the media. It has subsequently been alleged that false information generated by Ahmad Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress was given to Judith Miller and other journalists through WHIG.

On Sept. 9, 2002, Ledeen set up a secret meeting between Pollari and Deputy National Security Adviser Hadley. Two weeks before the meeting, a group of documents had been offered to journalist Elisabetta Burba of the Italian magazine *Panorama* for \$10,000, but the demand for money was soon dropped and the papers were handed over. The man offering the documents was Rocco Martino, a former SISMI officer who delivered the first WMD dossier to London in October 2002. That Martino quickly dropped his request for money suggests that the approach was a set-up primarily intended to surface the documents.

Panorama, perhaps not coincidentally, is owned by Prime Minister Berlusconi. On Oct. 9, the documents were taken from the magazine to the U.S. Embassy, where they were apparently expected. Instead of going to the CIA Station, which would have been the

normal procedure, they were sent straight to Washington where they bypassed the agency's analysts and went directly to the NSC and the Vice President's Office.

On Jan. 28, 2003, over the objections of the CIA and State, the famous 16 words about Niger's uranium were used in President Bush's State of the Union address justifying an attack on Iraq: "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa." Both the British and American governments had actually obtained the report from the Italians, who had asked that they not be identified as the source. The UN's International Atomic Energy Agency also looked at the documents shortly after Bush spoke and pronounced them crude forgeries.

President Bush soon stopped referring to the Niger uranium, but Vice President Cheney continued to insist that Iraq was seeking nuclear weapons.

The question remains: who forged the documents? The available evidence suggests that two candidates had access and motive: SISMI and the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans.

In January 2001, there was a break-in at the Niger Embassy in Rome. Documents were stolen but no valuables. The break-in was subsequently connected to, among others, Rocco Martino, who later provided the dossier to *Panorama*. Italian investigators now believe that Martino, with SISMI acquiescence, originally created a Niger dossier in an attempt to sell it to the French, who were managing the uranium concession in Niger and were concerned about unauthorized mining. Martino has since admitted to the *Financial Times* that both the Italian and American governments were behind the eventual forgery of the full Niger dossier as part of a disinformation operation. The authentic documents that

were stolen were bunched with the Niger uranium forgeries, using authentic letterhead and Niger Embassy stamps. By mixing the papers, the stolen documents were intended to establish the authenticity of the forgeries.

At this point, any American connection to the actual forgeries remains unsubstantiated, though the OSP at a minimum connived to circumvent established procedures to present the information directly to receptive policy makers in the White House. But if the OSP is more deeply involved, Michael Ledeen, who denies any connection with the Niger documents, would have been a logical intermediary in co-ordinating the falsification of the documents and their surfacing, as he was both a Pentagon contractor and was frequently in Italy. He could have easily been assisted by ex-CIA friends from Iran-Contra days, including a former Chief of Station from Rome, who, like Ledeen, was also a consultant for the Pentagon and the Iraqi National Congress.

It would have been extremely convenient for the administration, struggling to explain why Iraq was a threat, to be able to produce information from an unimpeachable "foreign intelligence source" to confirm the Iraqi worst-case.

The possible forgery of the information by Defense Department employees would explain the viciousness of the attack on Valerie Plame and her husband. Wilson, when he denounced the forgeries in the *New York Times* in July 2003, turned an issue in which there was little public interest into something much bigger. The investigation continues, but the campaign against this lone detractor suggests that the administration was concerned about something far weightier than his critical op-ed. ■

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The Weekly Standard's War

Murdoch's mag stands athwart history yelling, "Attack!"

By Scott McConnell

AS THE *Weekly Standard* celebrates its 10th birthday, it may be time to ask whether America has ever seen a more successful political magazine. Many have been more widely read, profitable, amusing, or brilliant. But in terms of actually changing the world and shaping the course of history, what contemporary magazine rivals the *Standard*? Even if you believe that the change has been much for the worse, the *Standard's* record of success in its own terms is formidable.

At the time of the *Standard's* founding in 1995, there was considerable speculation among neoconservatives over whether the movement had run its course. In "Neoconservatism: A Eulogy," Norman Podhoretz argued that neoconservatism had effectively put itself out of business by winning on its two major battle fronts: over communism and the residue of the 1960s counterculture. In the process, it had injected itself into the main body of American conservatism to such a degree that it was no longer particularly distinct from it. The eulogy was not a lamentation, more an appreciation of a job well done.

But while there was something to the Podhoretz argument, the American Right in 1995 did not have a neoconnish feel. Newt Gingrich and the new Congress were the center of gravity; Rush Limbaugh was a far more important figure than Bill Kristol; the issues that most agitated the Right, gays in the military and Whitewater, were either the province of religious and social conservatives or committed Republican partisans.

On other national issues, neocons were either uncertain or not on the cutting edge. Charles Murray's 1994 best-seller *The Bell Curve*, which argued that IQ was hereditarily based and was increasingly and ineluctably correlated with career success and life outcomes, was the most discussed and controversial book on the Right, but neocons were split over whether to distance themselves from it or quietly embrace at least some of its analyses. Immigration, already an issue of intense popular concern in California, was a key cause for *National Review*, the oldest and most popular magazine on the Right. But most neoconservatives deplored the immigration-reform impulse, with many claiming to see in it an echo of the restrictionists of the 1920s, whose legislation had the (obviously unintended) result of closing America's door to Jewish refugees a decade later.

Foreign policy, which had been a prime unifier of the Right during the Cold War, was on the back burner. Norman Podhoretz's *Commentary* had been waging a lonely battle against the Oslo peace process (a track leading to a Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank), but its position was very much in the minority among both foreign-affairs experts and American Jews. In the quarterlies, foreign-policy specialists debated America's role in the post-Cold War world, but it was hard for most newspaper readers to keep up with obscure struggles on the Balkans or complicated debate about NATO expansion. America, it seemed, had no real

enemies. Thus in 1995, it could be rightly claimed that the original neoconservative movement had spawned a successor generation, even two. But it was not clear what that generation's role would be, if any.

Enter the *Weekly Standard*—edited principally by William Kristol, a genial and sharp son of an eminent neoconservative family—which arrived on the scene thanks to a \$3 million annual subsidy from Rupert Murdoch. It is not always understood beyond the world of journalism that political opinion magazines almost invariably lose money—sometimes a lot of it. The deficits are usually made up by their owners and subscribers' contributions, some quite substantial. *Commentary* was supported for most of its life by the American Jewish Committee and now has a publication committee of formidably wealthy people. William F. Buckley's *National Review* always had angels; Buckley once answered a query about when his magazine would be profitable by saying, "You don't expect the Church to make a profit, do you?" The venerable *Nation*, at the time of the *Standard's* founding, had an annual deficit of roughly \$500,000, made up by owner Arthur Carter. The prestigious *Atlantic Monthly* reportedly loses between \$4 and \$8 million a year.

That said, while the *Standard's* reported subsidy was gigantic for a small ideological niche magazine, if Rupert Murdoch's purpose was to make things happen in Washington and in the world, he could not have leveraged it

better. One could spend 10 times that much on political action committees without achieving anything comparable.

It has never been obvious, however, what Murdoch's ideological and political ambitions were. A brilliant businessman, he was generally right-wing—though his newspapers and networks hardly humored socially conservative sensibilities. His papers tended to endorse conservative candidates who had a good chance of winning. More than anything else, he seemed to relish his triumph over the British press unions. He was not an immigration restrictionist but didn't share the neocon antipathy to them. In 1993, it took considerable effort by *New York Post* editorial-page editor Eric Breindel to persuade Murdoch that Rudy Giuliani was vastly superior to the incumbent David Dinkins as a candidate for mayor of New York. In one conversation I had with him (during my own brief tenure as *Post* editorial-page editor) about the paper's foreign-policy positions, he told me, when the discussion had veered to Israel and the Middle East, "Well, it might not have been a good idea to create it [Israel], but now that it's there, it has to be supported." A splendidly ambiguous statement—perfectly consistent with a strong pro-Israel position, but not the sort of thing an American neoconservative would ever say.

The subsidy Murdoch accorded the *Standard* assured the new venture would be highly visible by the standards of start-up political magazines. It could afford a wide newsstand presence: it is costly for any new magazine to print issues that will in most cases not be sold. The *Standard* not only passed out thousands of complimentary issues around Washington, it had them personally delivered to Beltway influentials as soon as they were printed. Above all, the new journal provided employment for a small coterie of neoconservative essay-

ists and a ready place to publish for dozens of apparatchiks who held posts at the American Enterprise Institute and other neocon-friendly think tanks.

With the fledgling Fox News network, the *Standard* soon emerged as the key leg in a synergistic triangle of neoconservative argumentation: you could write a piece for the magazine, talk about your ideas on Fox, pick up a paycheck from Kristol or from AEI. It was not a way to get rich, but it sustained a network of careers that might otherwise have shriveled or been diverted elsewhere. Indeed, it did more than sustain them, it gave neocons an aura of being "happening" inside the Beltway that no other conservative (or liberal) faction could match. Murdoch had refuted the otherwise plausible arguments in Norman Podhoretz's eulogy.

But what was the *Standard's* type of neoconservatism? To some degree the new magazine echoed the most popular GOP obsessions, exhibiting for example a limitless enthusiasm for Kenneth Starr's inquisition into Bill Clinton's sex life. It warned Republican lawmakers against supporting a 1996 immigration reform that would have reduced the numbers of legal and illegal immigrants. (Asians and Hispanics had "increasingly Republican partisan inclinations" the magazine claimed, without evidence.) It had a moment—one issue, precisely—of Great Fear when it seemed possible that Pat Buchanan would capture the 1996 Republican presidential nomination and devoted a three-article cover spread to bemoaning the possibility. (One piece was a smear, one a reasoned look at Buchanan's protectionist economic views, and one contained the interesting assertion that Buchanan's views on issues were not particularly extreme—and in fact shared by tens of millions of Americans—but his way of presenting them was, and therein lay the problem.) It published Robert Kagan's

attack on Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" under the charming neo-McCarthyesque title "Harvard Hates America." But except for its foreign-policy stances, the *Standard* seemed a bit themeless throughout its early life.

Nor does the recently released *The Weekly Standard: A Reader 1995-2005* pinpoint the editorial heart of the publication. The volume (as does the magazine itself) contains several excellent pieces, exuding an urbane and sophisticated moderate conservatism. Worthy of note is what may be the finest appreciation in print of the Columbia literary critic and neoconservative precursor Lionel Trilling, written by Gertrude Himmelfarb (Bill Kristol's mother). The collection also contains essays by Christopher Caldwell, Joseph Epstein, and Andrew Ferguson that any editor would be proud to publish. The magazine's hawkishness is not exactly swept under the bed; Kristol and Robert Kagan's "Saddam Must Go" editorial of November 1997 is reprinted: "We know it seems unthinkable to propose another ground attack to take Baghdad. But it's time to start thinking the unthinkable." Charles Krauthammer's "At Last, Zion" (May 1998) is a powerful and moving explanation of why Israel is at the center of his (and much neoconservative) consciousness. In "The Holocaust Shrug" (April 2004), David Gelernter wheels out the tried and tested appeasement analogy in support of the Iraq War. Saddam is no Hitler, Gelernter acknowledges, but "the world's *indifference* to Saddam resembles its indifference to Hitler."

But these foreign-policy essays, making up perhaps a fifth of the volume, don't do justice to the central role the Iraq War played in establishing the *Standard's* identity. For despite the publication's subsidy and visibility, before 9/11 it seemed to be floundering. It was unable to push George W. Bush in a direction it wanted. Most of the editors

had supported John McCain in the Republican primaries; no neoconservatives received cabinet-level posts in the administration. The varied balloons Kristol and company hoisted to give a focus to their politics (“national greatness conservatism” was one, with an emphasis on an assertive foreign policy and constructing patriotic monuments) never gained much altitude. In 2001, Kristol mentioned to some that he was considering closing down the magazine.

of shaping public opinion, the *Standard* emerged as the nerve center, a focal point to concentrate and diffuse the message of the Beltway neocons. For these bookish men, it was a Churchillian moment, an occasion to use words to rally a nation and shape history.

Their job was to divert America’s wrath away from those who perpetrated the attack and turn it against those who did not. It was, on the face of it, quite a stretch. The day before 9/11, the idea of

out a strategy that actually gave attacking Saddam priority over eliminating al-Qaeda. The first piece was illustrated with a caricature of Saddam, not bin Laden, and the proposed operational plan against bin Laden was astonishingly soft. “While it is probably not necessary to go to war with Afghanistan, a broad approach will be required,” they wrote. Taliban failure to help root out bin Laden ought to be “rewarded by aid to its Afghan opposition.” Presumably Ramsey Clark was tendering advice more dovish than this, but it could not have been by much.

Against Saddam, by contrast, no such caution was contemplated. “To be sure,” the PNAC duo intoned, “Usama bin Laden and his organization should be a prime target in this campaign. ... But the larger campaign must also go after Saddam Hussein. He might well be implicated in this week’s attacks ... or he might not. But as with bin Laden, we have long known that Saddam is our enemy, and that he would strike us as hard as he could. ... The only reasonable course when faced with such foes is to preempt and to strike first.” “Eliminating Saddam,” they concluded, “is the key to restoring our regional dominance.”

If by week two the *Standard* had laid out a grand strategy (focus on the Saddam end of the fanciful “Saddam-bin Laden axis”), by week three it had found an iconic cover photo to reinforce the message. Max Boot’s “The Case for an American Empire” was illustrated with two Navy enlisted men in bright white uniforms, one black, one white, raising (or perhaps lowering) the stars and stripes, the sea stretching before them. This imperialism, the photo said, would be based on racial harmony. It evoked the “France of 100 million” posters that recruited soldiers from the empire to fight the Huns in World War I. “Afghanistan and other troubled lands today cry out for the sort of enlightened foreign

THEIR JOB WAS TO **DIVERT AMERICA’S WRATH** AWAY FROM THOSE WHO PERPETRATED THE ATTACK AND **TURN IT AGAINST THOSE WHO DID NOT.**

The *Standard*’s last cover story before 9/11 was a long meditation by David Brooks on the TV show “Gilligan’s Island” and what the evolution of pop culture said about globalization.

One day a novel must be written that conveys the sense of purpose and energy that surged through the *Standard*’s offices—and that of the whole Washington neoconservative network—in the days after September 11, 2001. No more esoteric musings about Gilligan and the Skipper. The Project for a New American Century—a Bill Kristol-founded pressure group that specialized in gathering the signatures of the obscure and moderately famous in support of a more militarized foreign policy—would be ignored no longer. At long last, there would be an audience.

Inside the administration were Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and their staffs, heavy with signatories of the original 1998 PNAC Saddam-must-be-removed letter. They set out to neutralize the skeptical CIA and Colin Powell’s more cautious State Department and rush the White House into a war in Iraq. Their story has been told in several book-length accounts and administration memoirs. Outside, with the vital task

a ground invasion to overthrow Saddam Hussein’s Iraq was as “unthinkable” as it had been when Kristol and Kagan had first broached it four years earlier. But the country was confused—in shock and primed for vengeance. Suddenly there was a large national audience for foreign-policy discussion on the TV networks and talk-radio programs. The whole conservative movement was looking for guidance. If repetition could somehow insert into the national consciousness and thereby render plausible an idea that would otherwise have occurred to very few, the *Standard* would be up to the task. Again and again the refrain would be pounded out, “Saddam Must Go!” and would be picked up by commentators further down the ideological food chain.

In the first issue the magazine published after 9/11, Gary Schmitt and Tom Donnelly, two employees of Kristol’s PNAC, clarified what ought to be the country’s war aims. Their rhetoric—which laid down a line from which the magazine would not waver over the next 18 months—was to link Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden in virtually every paragraph, to join them at the hip in the minds of readers, and then to lay

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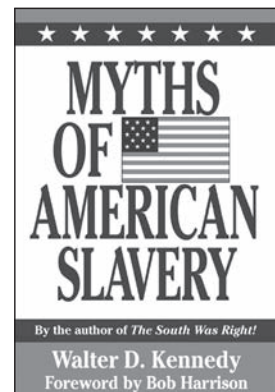
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administration once provided by self-confident Englishmen,” Boot wrote.

Once Afghanistan has been dealt with, America should “turn its attention to Iraq.” “Who cares if Saddam was involved” in the 9/11 attacks? Boot did not. Saddam “has already earned himself a death sentence a thousand times over. ... He is currently working to acquire weapons of mass destruction that he or his confederates will unleash against America. ... Once we have deposed Saddam, we can impose an American-led, international regency in Baghdad, to go along with the one in Kabul. With American seriousness and credibility thus restored, we will enjoy fruitful cooperation from the region’s many opportunists ...”

Standard writers would repeat these arguments for the next 17 months. “If two or three years from now Saddam is still in power, the war on terrorism will have failed,” wrote Gary Schmitt some weeks later. Several weeks after that, it was Reuel Marc Gerecht’s turn: “Unless

Bush and his team have since fallen out of favor in *Standard* land. The magazine has begun blaming the bungled prosecution of the war on Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and has called for his resignation. As Bush sinks in the polls, the journal will surely look to other politicians to carry out its aspirations. If David Brooks, now a *New York Times* columnist, is an indicator, that figure is likely to be a centrist or a “progressive” in the Joe Lieberman mode—conservatism as a vehicle for neoconservative foreign-policy goals having been pretty much run into the ground.

During the second week of the Iraq invasion, the Israeli newspaper *Ha’aretz* interviewed several intellectual supporters of the war. The *New York Times*’ Thomas Friedman (who backed the war despite being haunted by its similarities to Israel’s 1982 invasion of Lebanon, which he saw firsthand) suggested that this was very much an intellectuals’ war. “It’s the war the neoconservatives marketed. Those people had an idea to sell

analysis what fomented the war is America’s over-reaction to September 11. ... It is not only the neoconservatives that led us to the outskirts of Baghdad. What led us to the outskirts of Baghdad is a very American combination of anxiety and hubris.”

That kind of ambiguous conclusion about the *Standard*’s and the neocons’ role in starting the war is what the undisputed and public evidence will sustain. The *Standard* was important. It amplified the views of “the 25” the way luncheon seminars at the American Enterprise Institute and other neocon think tanks never could have.

Its role can be likened to the Yellow Press, the Hearst papers and Pulitzer’s *New York World*, which did everything they could to instigate a war against Spain over Cuba in the 1890s and boosted their circulation mightily in the process. In the wake of 9/11, the *Standard* didn’t have to create the martial atmosphere artificially, just divert it from Osama to Saddam.

Without the *Weekly Standard*, would the invasion of Iraq taken place? It’s impossible to know. Without the *Standard*, other voices—including those of the realist foreign-policy establishment, which had been dominant in the first Bush administration and which opposed a precipitous campaign against Saddam—would have been on a more level playing field with the neocons. That would have made a difference.

So in a sense the Iraq War is Bill Kristol’s War as much as it is George W. Bush’s and Dick Cheney’s, and the *Standard* is the vehicle that made it possible. It should go down in history as Rupert Murdoch’s War as well, and thus becomes by far the most significant historical event ever to be shaped by the Murdoch media.

How ironic it would be if it were not, in the end, a war Rupert Murdoch particularly wanted. ■

THE IRAQ WAR IS BILL KRISTOL’S WAR AS MUCH AS IT IS GEORGE W. BUSH’S AND DICK CHENEY’S, AND THE *STANDARD* IS THE VEHICLE THAT MADE IT POSSIBLE.

Saddam Hussein is removed, the war on terror will fail.” The line derived from the letter of menace Kristol and PNAC had addressed to George W. Bush on September 20, 2001. Failure to attack Iraq, they told the president, would “constitute an early and perhaps decisive surrender” in the War on Terror.

A magazine communicates through its covers as well. Most telling was one of George W. Bush, gesticulating before an audience of troops, arm extended in a Caesarian pose. “The Liberator,” the *Standard* headline proclaimed. Flatter the leader who will do your bidding. It was February 2003, and the editors knew by then that war was almost certain.

when September 11 came, and they sold it. Oh boy, did they sell it. So this is not a war that the masses demanded. This is a war of an elite. ... I could give you the names of 25 people (all of whom are at this moment within a five block radius of this office) who, if you had exiled them to a desert island a year and a half ago, the Iraq war would not have happened.” Then Friedman paused, clarifying, “It’s not some fantasy the neoconservatives invented. It’s not that 25 people hijacked America. You don’t take such a great nation into such a great adventure with Bill Kristol and the *Weekly Standard* and another five or six influential columnists. In the final

George “Wilson” Bush

How the dark side of America’s Liberal Tradition drives us to global crusades in democracy’s name.

By Michael C. Desch

THE DIRTY SECRET of this administration is that George W. Bush and his neo-conservative allies aren’t conservatives at all when it comes to their foreign policy. They are instead part of what Harvard Professor Louis Hartz called America’s “Liberal Tradition.” The subject of his classic book *The Liberal Tradition in America* was not lower-case liberalism, the guiding ideology of the American Left, but rather capital Liberalism, the political system based on individual freedom, equality of opportunity, free markets, and political representation.

Everyone is in favor of those things here at home. The problem is that when they dominate the exercise of foreign policy, they lead us to go abroad in search of monsters. The more natural foreign policy blueprint for the traditional Right is realism—the notion that states should pursue above all else their material power interests.

Historically, American foreign policy has been more sane and our nation more secure when realism has guided us. But it is not as deeply rooted in U.S. political culture. Indeed, non-Liberal politicians—Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, George H.W. Bush, and Brent Scowcroft—and thinkers—Hans Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr, George Kennan, and John Mearsheimer—are the exception rather than the rule.

Realism has prevailed before, often during the most pivotal periods of American diplomatic history. The policy of containment and the restructuring of

the Western alliance after World War II owes much to realist conceptions, as did the successful exploitation of the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1970s. But more often than not, realists have remained outside the core Washington consensus.

As neoconservative pundit Robert Kagan rightly notes, “The United States is a liberal, progressive society through and through, and to the extent that Americans believe in power, they believe it must be a means of advancing the principles of a liberal civilization and a liberal world order.”

The problem with America’s Liberal Tradition is that, as Hartz argues, at its core it contains a “deep and unwritten tyrannical compulsion” that “hampers creative action abroad by identifying the alien [the non-Liberal] with the unintelligible, and it inspires hysteria at home by generating the anxiety that unintelligible things produce.”

Thus America’s Liberal Tradition leads us to see today’s global War on Terror as a much more threatening type of war that can only be won by employing extreme tactics like pre-emption and torture. What makes it dangerous in this view is not so much the physical threat to our country (which is serious, to be sure), but rather the existential threat to our way of life and the uncivilized means our adversaries employ.

President Bush argues that our enemies “want to destroy what we stand for and how we live.” “Our terrorist enemies,” in his view, “seek to impose Tal-

iban-like rule, country by country.” Then-National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice offered a particularly poignant argument that the global War on Terror is being fought to defend American Liberal values:

Like many of you, I grew up around the home-grown terrorism of the 1960s. I remember the bombing of the church in Birmingham in 1963, because one of the little girls that died was a friend of mine . . . [L]et our voice not waver in speaking out on the side of people seeking freedom. And never let us indulge the condescending voices who allege that some people are not interested in freedom or aren’t ready for freedom’s responsibilities. That view was wrong in 1963 in Birmingham and it is wrong in 2003 in Baghdad.

The application of America’s Liberal Tradition to foreign policy casts our enemies in the War on Terror as outlaws operating beyond the bounds of civilization. The president has repeatedly reminded us that on 9/11, al-Qaeda targeted “our . . . civilian population, in direct violation of one of the principal norms of the law of warfare.” He sees rogue states like Saddam Hussein’s Iraq waging war against us in an uncivilized fashion, “In this conflict, America faces an Enemy who has no regard for the conventions of war or the rules of morality.”

America's Liberal Tradition leads us to think that the threat from terrorists or rogue states cannot simply be contained or managed but must be destroyed. It suggests two diametrically opposed strategies for doing this. On the one hand, building on longstanding Liberal arguments that democracies do not go to war with each other, America's Liberal Tradition advocates that the spread of democracy around the world be a central component of American foreign

ill-advised decision to disband the Iraqi army and undertake a large-scale purge of Iraq's civilian government.

On the other hand, the Liberal Tradition also leads Americans to believe that freedom's enemies represent such a dire peril that they must be annihilated. "Today, we face brutal and determined enemies—men who celebrate murder, incite suicide, and thirst for absolute power," President Bush claims, and "these enemies will not be stopped by

war against terrorism ushers in a new paradigm, one in which groups with broad, international reach commit horrific acts against innocent civilians, sometimes with the direct support of states. Our nation recognizes that this new paradigm—ushered in not by us, but by terrorists—requires new thinking in the law of war ..." The content of this new thinking was made clear in congressional testimony by Cofer Black, then head of the CIA's Counterterrorism Center: "There was before 9/11, and there was after 9/11. After 9/11 the gloves came off."

For Hartz, America's problem was not Liberalism *per se*, but rather Liberalism unchecked by any real ideological alternative. "It is not to disparage liberalism," he maintains, "to say that a knowledge of it and nothing else can produce an absolute temper of mind that in the end is self-defeating." In his view, America's Liberal Tradition is so deep-seated and all-encompassing that there is little real debate about the objectives of American policies such as spreading democracy, merely quibbles about how to achieve them (unilaterally vs. multilaterally).

In the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, support for the war was bipartisan, largely because it was justified within this bipartisan Liberal Tradition. Today, even though it is clear that the war was unnecessary and it appears increasingly unlikely that we will succeed in our efforts to democratize Iraq, most Democrats still criticize only the administration's tactics rather than its larger objectives. Liberals have a hard time criticizing the Bush administration's policies because they buy into so many of the Liberal Tradition premises that undergird them.

A real challenge can therefore only come from outside, and realism offers the clearest alternative. Realists take seriously the threat from international terrorism but keep it in historical perspective. They are also skeptical of the administration's claim that we face a

THE LIBERAL TRADITION HOLDS THAT **SPREADING DEMOCRACY** IS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT THAN **MAINTAINING STABILITY**.

policy. Bill Clinton's 1996 *National Security Strategy* stated, "the more that democracy and political and economic liberalization take hold in the world ... the safer our nation is likely to be and the more our people are likely to prosper." Likewise, in his 2004 State of the Union address, President Bush confirmed, "our aim is a democratic peace." His national security adviser subsequently explained, "President Bush's foreign policy is a bold new vision that draws inspiration from the ideas that have guided American foreign policy at its best: That democracies must never lack the will or the means to meet and defeat freedom's enemies, that America's power and purpose must be used to defend freedom, and that the spread of democracy leads to lasting peace."

The Liberal Tradition holds that spreading democracy is even more important than maintaining stability. Recall Defense Secretary Don Rumsfeld's cavalier dismissal of the mayhem in Iraq after the fall of Baghdad: "Freedom's untidy, and free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things. They're also free to live their lives and do wonderful things." This belief led to the Coalition Provisional Authority's

negotiations, or concessions, or appeals to reason. In this war, there is only one option—and that is victory." In his view, "there is no neutral ground—no neutral ground—in the fight between civilization and terror, because there is no neutral ground between good and evil, freedom and slavery, and life and death."

Vice President Dick Cheney echoes these sentiments: "Such a group [as al-Qaeda] cannot be held back by deterrence, nor reasoned with through diplomacy. For this reason, the war against terror will not end in a treaty. There will be no summit meeting, no negotiations with terrorists. This conflict can only end in their complete and utter destruction."

Even such moderate figures in the Bush administration as former Secretary of State Colin Powell argue, "any organization that is tainted by terrorist elements in it or a philosophy of terrorism, we can't work with. And that has to be eliminated."

The most disturbing manifestation of this has been the White House's willingness to flout international norms governing the treatment of prisoners, condoning or even employing torture in the course of interrogations. In a February 2002 memorandum, the president argued, "the

more dangerous adversary now in al-Qaeda than we did from the Soviet Union during the Cold War. After all, the Soviets had a huge nuclear arsenal, while our worst-case fears today are that al-Qaeda might get one or two crude radiological “dirty bombs.” Realism counsels prudent caution but not panic in our approach to the global War on Terror.

Realists also have a more balanced perspective on al-Qaeda. Rather than seeing bin Ladin and his allies as mindless religious fanatics bent on destroying our way of life, realists understand that they are pursuing a coherent political agenda to end the United States’ military presence in the Middle East. And realists understand that al-Qaeda’s tactics—particularly suicide terrorism—make perfect sense for a weak non-state actor who has no other choice than to wage asymmetric warfare. Realists recognize that we are in a dangerous fight, but they are less inclined to regard al-Qaeda as implacable and invincible.

And it has been the realists in the American military who have been more consistently committed to upholding the Geneva Conventions and maintaining the norm against torture than have civilian politicians and pundits. True, the basis of this commitment has been pragmatic—military professionals support the Geneva Conventions because they understand that they benefit American troops—rather than principled. But no matter what their rationale, military realists are less likely than civilian liberals to place our enemies beyond the pale of civilization.

Finally, realists have been far less enthusiastic about American efforts to achieve hegemony than either liberals or the Bush administration. Realists understand that the rest of the world does not see the United States as a benign hegemon despite our good intentions. They fear that as the United States grasps for world domination it will

instead generate opposition around the world resulting in greater international tension and conflict.

The few times that realism has guided American foreign policy—Nixon and Kissinger’s decision to pull back from our failed commitment to South Vietnam and George H.W. Bush and Brent Scowcroft’s adroit management of the reunification of Germany and the first Gulf War—the United States and the world have been better off. The challenge for realism is that, unlike the Liberal Tradition, it is not particularly American. Not only does realism have its intellectual roots in Old Europe, particularly in the states of the “Axis of Weasel” such as France (Talleyrand and Raymond Aron) and Germany (Bis-

marck and Hans Morgenthau); it is also out of sync with such core American traits as optimism about the future and the deeply rooted belief that America is exceptional, vastly different from other nations, a Shining City on a Hill.

On the other hand, when the conduct of American foreign policy has been grounded in realism—particularly in perilous times—it has been both creative and effective. A return is needed now more than ever. ■

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Know Thine Enemy

The Iraqi resistance is not the motley band that the Bush administration claims.

By Eric S. Margolis

TWO AND A HALF years after President Bush triumphantly declared “mission accomplished” in Iraq, 150,000 U.S. and British troops, aided by contingents of foreign auxiliaries, are locked in a growing guerrilla war against more than 20 different resistance groups about which remarkably little is known.

U.S. commanders in Iraq are now estimating it may take seven to 10 more years of combat before these resistance forces are defeated and Iraq becomes a docile and lucrative American ally.

To understand the ongoing guerrilla war, go back to the eve of the U.S. offensive in Kuwait in 1991. At that time, President Saddam Hussein of Iraq proclaimed “the Mother of All Battles.” This memo-

orable gasconade provoked sneers and jokes in America, particularly after Iraq’s forces were easily routed and driven from Kuwait. But what Americans did not grasp then, nor 12 years later when they invaded Iraq, was that Saddam’s planned Mother of All Battles was not to be simply a hopelessly lopsided war between America’s high-technology forces and Iraq’s World War I military.

Far from it. Saddam was no fool. He knew his regular forces could not withstand attack by the U.S. and Britain. The only way Iraq could resist was to follow the successful model of Lebanon’s Hezbollah guerrillas, the only Arab force ever to defeat the mighty, high-tech Israelis.

Six months before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Saddam and the Baath leadership began preparing for a decade-long guerrilla war. Huge amounts of explosives, small arms, and ammunition were cached across the Arab areas of Iraq. Hundreds of millions of U.S. dollars were secreted inside Iraq and abroad.

When invasion spearheads reached the outskirts of Baghdad, Iraq's best divisions, the Republican Guards, were ordered to disband, remove their uniforms, and blend into the civilian population. This abrupt disappearance of Iraq's elite divisions and other paramilitary units confused the invaders and gave the erroneous impression that resistance in Iraq had totally collapsed.

The neocons, who engineered this war, crowed in triumph over the invincibility of U.S. arms, vindication of their claims there would be no real resistance in Iraq, and the prospect, as enunciated by the war's chief architect, Paul Wolfowitz, that Iraq's plundered oil would finance the entire cost of the invasion and occupation, then produce a bonanza for American business.

resistance groups followed a plan devised by the former Baath high command to attack the Achilles heel of the U.S. occupation: road transport.

The U.S. troops scattered across Iraq mostly depended on truck convoys coming up over hundreds of miles of roads from Kuwait. These vulnerable supply trains became a primary target for Iraq's guerrillas. Since U.S. forces used body armor and had large numbers of armored vehicles, the resistance opted for powerful bombs—improvised explosive devices, in U.S. military argot—that proved deadly against American troops and equipment and allowed the guerrilla to escape the scene before counter-attack by patrolling U.S. aircraft and helicopters. The perils of Iraqi road roulette severely affected the morale of American forces.

The other prime targets of Iraq's resistance—"to stop the Americans from stealing our oil"—were oil pipelines, pumping stations, and loading terminals, and Iraq's oil production has actually fallen since the March 2003 invasion. In January 2003, Iraq was pro-

Iraq War every time they fill their tanks.

And the Iraqi resistance shows no sign of flagging. On the contrary, it has steadily grown since 2003. Today, there are an estimated 40,000 full-time fighters, mostly former army veterans, concentrated in the Sunni triangle. Another 250,000 to 2 million Iraqis are considered active resistance supporters. The 20th century's guerrilla wars showed that a troop superiority of 10:1 is generally needed to defeat irregular forces, a ratio that overstretched U.S. forces in Iraq are nowhere near.

The resistance is composed of a dizzying mosaic of groups whose names keep changing or mean little. The most effective are army veterans, many of whom still seem to be following orders of the underground Ba'ath command, led by former Vice President Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri. Notable among the former military men are Al Medina Division, Saddam's Fedayeen, and al-Awada and the Arab Resistance Brigades, as well as members of the disbanded security services.

The next largest group is composed of tribal fighters like Ansar as-Sunnah from Sunni regions of western Iraq bordering Syria and Saudi Arabia. Interestingly, while the Bush White House has been damning Syria for abetting the resistance, this writer's Arab sources tell him that rather more support for the guerrillas is discreetly coming from U.S. allies Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

Neither of these Sunni nations want to see a Shia-dominated Iraq, which they are convinced will quickly fall under the sway of their most hated enemy, Iran. Both strongly backed Saddam in his long war against Iran. By contrast, Syria has been trying hard to control its long, porous border with Iraq for fear of a U.S.-Israeli attack.

There are also many smaller regionally based ideological or religious groups, ranging from the militant Islamists of the Salafist movement to

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In an act of unprecedented stupidity, American proconsul Paul Bremer disbanded the Iraqi army and police and proscribed former members of the Ba'ath Party, thus assuring the new U.S.-installed puppet regime would not only lack defenders but would be faced by an army of bitter, unemployed malcontents.

The neocons' dreams quickly proved a chimera. While Iraq's Shia and Kurds aligned themselves with the Americans, increasingly active and effective Sunni

ducing 2.6 million barrels daily in spite of a badly decayed petroleum infrastructure caused by the punishing embargo. By May, oil production in U.S.-ruled Iraq fell to 1.9 million barrels daily.

Far from plundering Iraq's oil riches, the U.S. is now forced to pour funds into Iraq, including tens of millions to pay mercenaries to guard oil infrastructure. The decline in Iraq's oil exports has contributed to the world petroleum shortage and a steady rise in prices. American motorists are paying a premium for the

veteran anti-Saddam urban movements like the Nasserites, Communists, Socialists, and National Resistance Brigades.

In 2004, many of these groups issued a joint call for liberation of Iraq from all foreign occupation and a free, democratic election of a national federal government after a two-year transition period. None of this was reported by the U.S. media.

While the bulk of fighting is done by the above-mentioned groups, a small number of genuine terrorists has hogged much of the limelight and provided the Bush White House with an extremely useful pretext to denounce all resistance to foreign occupation of Iraq as “terrorism.”

Of the three or four militant Islamist organizations operating in Iraq, the Zarqawi group—which bills itself as “Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers”—has been the deadliest. These groups are behind waves of suicide bombings against civilian and government targets. Their deadly attacks have two main objectives: frightening Iraqis away from joining the U.S.-installed regime’s army and provoking Shia to civil war.

Contrary to U.S. claims, foreign jihadis amount to no more than a few thousand, mostly from Algeria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, western Europe, and Lebanon. There were about two million Arab guest workers in Iraq in the 1990s; some have likely joined the resistance.

A small number of jihadi veterans from the wars in Afghanistan, Kashmir, Chechnya, and Bosnia have also come to Iraq, which has become another Afghanistan for the entire Muslim world—a jihad to defend oppressed Muslims that attracts many idealistic young men. Many of the car suicide bombers appear to be non-Iraqi jihadis.

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi has been blown out of proportion by the Bush administration to advance its claim that

invading Iraq was all part of a global War on Terror. The recent arrest in Basra of two British SAS agents with a bag full of explosives reinforced assertions by the Arab media that the U.S. and Britain are secretly staging terrorist attacks, which are blamed on the shadowy Zarqawi, to perpetuate their rule over Iraq by the old British tactic of divide and conquer.

CONTRARY TO U.S. CLAIMS, FOREIGN JIHADIS AMOUNT TO NO MORE THAN A FEW THOUSAND, MOSTLY FROM ALGERIA, YEMEN, SAUDI ARABIA, JORDAN, WESTERN EUROPE, AND LEBANON.

Into this witch’s cauldron add the Mahdi Army Shia militia of cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, which previously battled U.S. forces but is now quiescent. Al-Sadr has a strong following among Shia youth who oppose foreign occupation and remains at scimitars drawn with the senior Shia establishment, led by Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and Mohammed Bakr al-Hakim, which allied itself, at least temporarily, with the U.S. occupation.

During the eight-year Iran-Iraq War, al-Hakim’s Badr Brigades fought alongside Iran against Iraq. As a result, many Iraqis regard them as traitors. The Badr Brigades and the Kurdish *peshmerga* militias are the only effective Iraqi units fighting on the side of the Americans, a situation that ensures continued hostility from their traditional Sunni foes.

All other Iraqi government military, police, and intelligence units are totally infiltrated by the resistance. As in the Vietnam War, whose cost has now been equaled by the Iraq conflict, almost all of the massive U.S. search-and-destroy missions and major military operations are telegraphed to the resistance well in advance by their agents inside government forces.

Nearly all 20th-century colonial wars, from Central America to Kash-

mir, bear the same ugly pattern: the occupying army is quickly brutalized and corrupted by guerrilla warfare. Mass reprisals, like the U.S. savaging of Fallujah and Tal Afar, become the norm. Tens of thousands are thrown into prison camps. Torture and execution of prisoners is endemic. The occupation troops become cynical, violent,

brutish, and depressed, further alienating the population. The occupation army presence sparks hatred and resistance.

As this magazine predicted in 2002, the U.S. has become well and truly stuck in Iraq. So long as the resistance remains strong and effective, the Bush administration’s strategic plan to rule Iraq from four major bases and leave local security to native troops, as the British imperialists did, does not appear destined to work.

The senior U.S. commander in Iraq recently admitted that only one Iraqi government battalion was ready to operate without American supervision. Overstretched U.S. forces in Iraq cannot win the growing guerrilla war on their own, nor even contain it, and they cannot for long afford to spend \$6 billion a month chasing Iraqi rebels.

U.S. troops are too expensive to use in guerrilla wars. But right now there seems no alternative, except to declare victory, as was done in Vietnam, and retreat. ■

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Arts & Letters

FILM

[Kiss Kiss Bang Bang]

Chandler's Long Shadow

By Steve Sailer

"KISS KISS BANG BANG" is a comic tribute to two of the richest veins of American pop culture during the last century: the hard-boiled Hollywood private-eye novel, invented by Raymond Chandler in 1939's *The Big Sleep*, and its cousin, the LAPD mismatched buddy-cop movie, honed to commercial perfection by screenwriter Shane Black in 1987's "Lethal Weapon."

After making himself perhaps the highest paid and most despised screenwriter, Black disappeared a decade ago. Now, Black is back with a loving spoof of the Chandlerian tradition, an ingenious, self-satirical contrivance that would be incomprehensible to anyone not familiar with Chandler's glorious cinematic offspring, such as "Chinatown," "Blade Runner," "L.A. Confidential," and "The Big Lebowski." Indeed, "Kiss Kiss Bang Bang" is so fast-paced and convoluted that it's close to impenetrable, period. As in Chandler's Philip Marlowe novels, figuring out whodunnit takes a backseat to just enjoying the ride.

To play his detective leads, Black was able to cheaply hire two of the most gifted but least trustworthy stars, Robert Downey Jr. and Val Kilmer. When just a small boy, Downey began receiving recreational drugs from his father, the leftist director of "Putney Swope." His abusive upbringing appears to have

rewired his brain, connecting it directly to his mouth, making him superhumanly articulate but also deactivating all the normal circuits for self-restraint and common sense. Watching this wounded man-child play a lovable loser to perfection resembles what it must have been like listening to the great castrati sing arias—simultaneously awe-inspiring and guilt-inducing.

The Los Angeles detective tale has attracted some of the finest masculine storytelling talent of the last three generations, both filmmakers and crime novelists such as Ross Macdonald and Walter Mosley. Yet Chandler's legacy is often misunderstood.

In 1930, Dashiell Hammett took the detective story out of the country estate drawing room with *The Maltese Falcon*. It was exactly the kind of nonliterary novel that adapts well for the screen. Indeed, John Huston's first draft for his classic 1941 movie with Humphrey Bogart as Sam Spade was merely Hammett's book retyped in screenplay format. Still, as Chandler noted, Hammett's language "had no overtones, left no echo, evoked no image beyond a distant hill."

Chandler taught himself to write pulp fiction in Hammett's style, but, armed with his Proustian eye for evocative detail, his aesthetic ambitions were higher. In *The Big Sleep* and his 1940 masterpiece *Farewell, My Lovely*, Chandler devised a new, endlessly imitated prose style that lifted the detective story to an unexpected level of artistry.

The French term *film noir* for movies such as 1944's "Double Indemnity" (for which Chandler rewrote James M. Cain's dialogue) and the 1946 adaptation of "The Big Sleep" has perpetually confused thinking about Chandler's books by implying that they are morally and visually dark. In reality, the bad guys

serve as contrasting backdrop for Chandler's shining hero Marlowe, of whom the author idealistically proclaimed, "In everything that can be called art there is a quality of redemption. ... Down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid."

Nor is the L.A. of Chandler's pages the dingy, underlit Warner Bros. backlot of '40s *film noir*. The gorgeousness of Chandler's vision wasn't transferred to the screen until 1974 in Roman Polanski's "Chinatown." The celebrated plot is largely Watergate-era tosh—millions now believe that the great aqueduct engineer William Mulholland impregnated his daughter—of which even its screenwriter, Robert Towne, has grown increasingly embarrassed. Yet "Chinatown's" cinematography revealed how beautiful Los Angeles had been before smog enveloped it during the World War II boom.

While "Chinatown" embodied L.A.'s past, in 1982 "Blade Runner" indelibly envisioned for L.A. a dystopian future unleashed by uncontrolled immigration.

"Kiss Kiss Bang Bang" is a much slighter effort than those two monumental films. Nor is it quite up to the standard set by the Coen Brothers' shaggy-dog version of Chandler, "The Big Lebowski," which is now generally thought the most hilarious film of the '90s. Still, "Kiss Kiss" is as smart and funny as any film so far this year.

The question this minor masterpiece of mannerism raises and can't answer is whether the L.A. detective genre has become so barnacled with past greatness that it's inevitable that all new renditions will similarly end up being about their predecessors rather than about anything remotely resembling real life. ■

Rated R for language, violence, and sexuality/nudity.

BOOKS

[*Thomas Paine and the Promise of America*, Harvey J. Kaye, Hill and Wang, 326 pages]

American Revolutionist

By Daniel McCarthy

IN A SMALL WAY, this book attempts to do for the Left what *The Conservative Mind* did for the Right half a century ago. Back then, nothing seemed so un-American as conservatism, the political philosophy of a Metternich or a Bismarck rather than an Adams or a Madison. Even Sen. Robert A. Taft, "Mr. Republican," called himself a liberal. Today, tides of political fashion having turned, Harvey Kaye finds himself having to make the case that liberalism is no late transplant to these shores but has roots in soil as deep and old as the Revolution itself.

To do that, Kaye, a professor of Social Change and Development at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, returns to the life and thought of Thomas Paine, whose near-impeccable credentials as a radical make him a suitable Founding Father of the American Left. But the works and ways of Paine are only half of this book; like Russell Kirk, Kaye sets out to trace a genealogy, one that runs from Abraham Lincoln and Robert Owen through women's suffragists and Franklin Roosevelt down to the present day. As Kaye would have it, the spirit and example of Paine have informed almost all of America's progressive movements.

Conservatives, though not Kaye's intended audience, stand to profit in two ways from his efforts. In reminding us of the radical tendencies of the American Revolution, Kaye indirectly furnishes an explanation for the surprising popularity of neoconservative ideology. The

sons of Podhoretz, metaphorically speaking, may find much of American history as remote from their concerns as the War of the Roses, but their universalist aspirations and ardor for global revolution stir some of the same passions in the American psyche that Paine once inflamed. "The true idea of a great nation, is that which promotes and extends the principles of universal society," Paine wrote in his *Letter to the Abbé Raynal*, and eventually he came to favor exporting the French Revolution to Prussia and Austria by force of arms.

The second service Kaye renders to the Right is to shake us out of the complacent belief that our own Revolution was entirely conservative. Paine, through *Common Sense* and *The Crisis*, was as integral to the Revolution as was Lexington and Concord, and the radicalism of Burke's pamphleteering foe is in no doubt. While other rebellious colonial Englishmen still spared King George the brunt of their criticism and prayed for rapprochement, Paine demanded independence and a republic. He went further, too, beyond the point where most Americans were willing to follow him, calling for the abolition of slavery, universal male suffrage, and a progressive land tax. When, after the Revolution, he assailed organized religion in *The Age of Reason*, Paine cost himself much of the esteem in which he had been held by the American public. But even then, he gave eloquent voice to a persistent minority. Kaye is convincing when he argues that there has always been a Paine strain in the American character. Such a strain surely is not conservative, though one may question whether it is as liberal, in the modern sense, as Kaye believes.

The biographical half of Kaye's book is compelling. He sketches Paine's life deftly and sympathetically; Paine makes a plausible working-class hero, which is just what Kaye would have him be. Born in 1737, Paine was the son of a Quaker and an Anglican, ensuring him an early acquaintance with Britain's political-religious conflicts. As a young man he held a variety of mostly low-paying jobs, as corsetmaker, sailor, small-shop keeper,

and excise officer. He lost the shop and his excise position in 1773, and with the breakup of his second marriage, nothing remained to tie him to his country. The following year, carrying a letter of introduction from Benjamin Franklin, he came to America. Soon he made a new life for himself as journalist-cum-propagandist, becoming editor of *The Pennsylvania Magazine* almost immediately and more than doubling its circulation, turning it into the best-selling magazine in the colonies. And that, of course, was only the beginning.

For all that *Common Sense* and *The Crisis* did for the cause of independence, Paine made enemies among his new countrymen, most notably, in Kaye's account, the snobbish Gouverneur Morris, who after the Revolution characterized Paine—in Congress, no less—as "a mere adventurer from England, without fortune, without family or connexions, ignorant even of grammar." Morris would very nearly be the death of Paine in 1793, when as American minister at Paris he made only the feeblest efforts to have Paine released from the prison into which the Jacobins had clapped him.

The French had feted Paine when he came to them the previous year, awarding him honorary citizenship and, upon his arrival in Calais, making him a representative to the National Assembly. There he was closer to the Girondins than the Jacobins, and not long after Robespierre's ascent, Paine, now a "foreign conspirator," was imprisoned. He would have been executed, too, had Robespierre not preceded him to the guillotine. With James Monroe succeeding Morris in Paris, an ailing Paine was soon released into the care of the future president and his wife. The episode neatly illustrates—though Kaye does not dwell on it—the propensity of revolution to consume its own, in this case threatening to devour not its offspring but its spiritual forebear.

Kaye's account of the ideological struggle taking place in America while Paine languished in France holds just as much interest. In his telling, the work of

such barnstorming Painites and radical democrats as Abraham Bishop, Jedidiah Peck, and Matthew Lyon—as well as Paine-inspired newspapermen like Benjamin Franklin Bache and Philip Freneau—readied the way for Jefferson’s “Second American Revolution.” “America in the early 1790s witnessed a ‘veritable Paine revival,’” Kaye writes, though he notes that Jefferson himself never credited Paine for his 1800 victory. Indeed, while Paine’s revolutionary rhetoric and *The Rights of Man* might have helped Jefferson, Kaye acknowledges that where *The Age of Reason* is concerned, “the work would make Paine anathema to those who had long considered him one of their champions.” On other questions, Americans were willing to embrace Paine *en masse*, even while disagreeing with his most radical proposals. But in religion, Paine and the American public were intractably at odds.

This poses a problem for Kaye, one that goes largely unaddressed in *Thomas Paine and the Promise of America*. “Freethinker” is one of Kaye’s favorite words, ranking alongside “democracy,” the latter of which he frequently italicizes for further effect. Kaye evidently is no great admirer of religion, although he duly notes the role progressive Christianity has played in American social movements of the Left. Still, atheists, agnostics, and deists receive the most attention within his pages. Kaye is on firm footing with respect to his central theme here: the American Left is at least superficially Painite in its staunch secularism. But if Kaye expects the Left to renew its appeal to the American public by returning to the spirit of Paine, this thread of his thought is the very worst one to emphasize.

As well, the more closely one compares Paine’s earnest deism to today’s antireligious Left, the more difficult it becomes to escape the conclusion that the two are not so closely related after all. Paine took religion seriously and wrote in good faith, however heterodox his conclusions. Those who now have nothing better to do than campaign for the removal of the words “under God” from

the Pledge of Allegiance, on the other hand, seem motivated less by the spirit of Enlightenment than by simple spite.

Kaye’s book becomes progressively less interesting as he advances through history, leaving the Age of Paine for abolitionism, the labor movement, and the welfare-warfare state of Wilson and FDR. Rarely is his account more than one-dimensional: the rich and religious, at almost every turn, wear the black hats. The poor, and those who claim to speak for them, are Kaye’s heroes. When Paine’s influence upon the nation wanes, it is thanks to conspiracies by the “propertied, powerful, and pious”—usually assumed to be more or less the same, despite the readily apparent religious convictions of ordinary Americans throughout history. Kaye’s skepticism is reserved entirely for church and industry; strangely for an admirer of Paine, he shows little concern for the idea that “Society in every state is a blessing, but Government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil.”

Paine himself came to adopt a more expansive view of compulsory power than that line would suggest, but it remains doubtful that he would have embraced the managerial state the way modern liberals have done. As Kaye notes, Paine was no socialist, and while he was egalitarian up to a point, he forthrightly recognized that “property will ever be unequal.” Usually, Kaye is conscientious in reminding his readers on the Left that Paine’s understanding of the free market is not theirs. “It may seem odd to many of us today,” he writes, “but like many eighteenth-century radicals ... Paine comprehended ‘political liberty and economic liberty’ as mutually interdependent and imagined that economic freedom served to assure equality of opportunity *and* results.” But Paine’s economics, unlike his religious views, our author is content to leave in the past.

Kaye hardly fails to consider Paine’s afterlife on the American Right, however. Indeed, both his first chapter and his next-to-last open with Ronald Reagan’s acceptance speech at the 1980

Republican convention, where Reagan, quoting from *The Rights of Man*, assured us, “We have it in our power to begin the world over again.” This was not the customary language of the American conservatism. But Reagan had been, and in some ways remained, a New Deal liberal himself, and according to Kaye, “like Paine, he grasped that no political movement could succeed in the United States that did not project the ‘progressive’ understandings of the nation’s prospects and possibilities.”

Not that Reagan was the first on the Right to adopt Paine. Kaye passes fleetingly over the Old Right, the individualist writers from the 1920s to 1940s who stood for *laissez faire* at home and neutralism in foreign affairs. He recognizes, but understates, their affinity with Paine. Had he delved deeper, he would have discovered that Albert Jay Nock, for example, had hoped to republish Paine’s *Agrarian Justice* and that the journal he edited, *The Freeman*, he had originally wanted to call *Common Sense*. Kaye, however, has only a faint knowledge of the Old Right; he believes after World War II “they became staunch anti-communists and McCarthyites.” Applied to Frank Chodorov and Murray Rothbard, both named by Kaye, this is entirely misleading. They were anti-communist all right and occasionally had a good word for McCarthy, but those men—and others like them—were second to none in decrying Cold War militarism and any abridgement of civil liberties.

Kaye is a serious enough historian that he could have produced an insightful chapter or two on Paine and the interwar Right or Paine and such earlier unorthodox conservatives as the atheist Robert Ingersoll, who receives similarly cursory treatment. There is at least as much Paine in them as in Robert Owen or Victoria Woodhull. But this book is not the place to look for the history of the Painite Right. As a primer of Paine’s life and legacy on the Left, however, Kaye’s work serves its purpose, and one need not buy into his story in every particular to benefit from it. ■

[Here's Where I Stand: A Memoir, Jesse Helms, Random House, 317 pages]

Unvanquished

By Joe Scotchie

FOR MANY CONSERVATIVES, the publication of Jesse Helms's memoirs is a melancholy event. It reminds them of a time when there was one politician they could count on, time and time again, to take lonely stands against polite—i.e., liberal—opinion. On Capitol Hill, conservatives had no finer champion than Jesse Helms, the longtime Republican senator from North Carolina. Once he took a position on any issue, foreign or domestic, he stuck to it with a tenacity that was absolutely inspiring. There are principled conservatives in Congress today: Ron Paul and Tom Tancredo, for instance, in the House, and Tom Coburn in the Senate. But there will never be another Jesse Helms. He probably was on the losing end of more 99-1 votes than any senator in history. That distinction alone should earn him a special spot in the right-wing section of heaven.

Much of the book is comprised of reminiscences, including those of the presidents and senators with whom Helms served. There is also a warm remembrance of his Mayberry-style boyhood in Monroe, North Carolina, along with loving tributes to Dorothy Coble, his wife of over 60 years. But it is Helms on the issues that gives the book its wallop. To read such sections is to recall what an electrifying figure Helms was. Liberals could hardly believe that such a figure still existed. The “second reconstruction” of the 1950s and '60s was to have made his hell-for-leather style obsolete. Many Southern pols would move left or moderate their style. But not this upstart from North Carolina, a state once hailed as the region's most liberal, the “Wisconsin of the South.”

Helms is at his best when tackling what he dubs the “Hot Button Issues.” He recounts his bitter criticism of the

National Endowment for the Arts after he discovered the dubious “artwork” of Robert Mapplethorpe and such taxpayer-funded worthies as Andres Serrano's “Piss Christ.” He revives the long-lost school prayer issue. And he gives no quarter to legalized abortion. At such moments, Helms's courage utterly shames his enemies. What also shines through is his sincerity when confronting those issues that GOP regulars have long considered irrelevant. For instance, on NEA funding, Helms claims:

The assault on America's basic values by self-proclaimed, self-appointed “artists,” who so often assaulted the moral sensibilities of the American people, is real and easily documented. I was happy to do everything in my power to end this funding.

Then on outlawing school prayer:

It is hardly coincidence that banishing the Lord from the public schools has resulted in the schools being taken over by a totally secularist philosophy. Christianity has been driven out. In its place has been enshrined a ... permissiveness in which the drug culture has flourished, as have pornography, crime, and fornication—in short, everything but disciplined learning.

Finally, on abortion, which is where Helms's eloquence reaches its peak:

I ... have been criticized for comparing the scourge of abortions with the Holocaust, but I reject such criticism because this is indeed another kind of holocaust. ... Killing unborn babies has become a tool of convenience in today's permissive society. At latest count, more than 40 million unborn children have been deliberately, intentionally destroyed. What word adequately defines the scope of such slaughter?

That no complete victories have been won on these and other cultural issues is hardly the fault of a single senator. The best Helms could achieve were partial

triumphs: the NEA wasn't abolished, but under Dana Gioia's chairmanship, no dirty art has been funded and some worthy proposals have been launched. In his first term, President Bush signed a bill outlawing partial-birth abortion, and even leading Democrats now proclaim their desire to reduce the number of abortions. Thanks to mid-1980s legislation, Bible Clubs have proliferated at high schools across the country. Lack of greater victories, especially on abortion and prayer, is due to the Supreme Court's enduring liberal majority.

Concerning the civil-rights era, Helms delivers no *mea culpa* for his opposition to federal interference in Dixie's affairs. Helms was a most patriotic conservative. He also is a Southern patriot. It would have been impossible for him to support court rulings that dictated to Southerners on how their public schools should be operated. Helms recalls an earlier era when “black neighbors and white neighbors depended on each other, and the vast majority lived in harmony.” What he opposed was social engineering, especially forced busing that “fostered hatred and bigotry by polarizing the very people who most needed to work together ...”

Helms revisits his opposition to the federal Martin Luther King holiday. He recites some of his reasons: King's highly critical comments on America's conduct in Vietnam and his communist allies—“these agents of overthrow” as Helms terms them. I suspect Helms also acted out of a sense of *pietas*: in the North Carolina of his youth, the third week of January had a Robert E. Lee holiday.

Throughout the 1970s and '80s, Helms reigned as the premier outlaw figure on Capitol Hill. By the late 1990s, he was chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, a position that gave him some standing in Washington. Liberals might have been surprised to see Madeleine Albright attending an event with Helms at the Jesse Helms Center in Monroe. Some conservatives, I'm sure, were similarly uneasy. During the Clinton years, Helms opposed the invasion of Haiti but supported the war against Yugoslavia. His willingness to fight the culture wars was

the chief reason conservatives loved Helms. In this book, however, more space is given to foreign affairs.

Surprisingly, Helms can sound positively globalist when formulating America's place in the world. America, he writes, should "promote the rights of women and children, including women's suffrage in those countries where women ... do not have the right to vote." He falls for the notion of America as a proposition nation. (How about just a constitutional republic?) Helms even uses Jesus' injunction "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded" to defend his internationalism. One seriously doubts that such teachings should mean undermining foreign leaders through economic sanctions, even if those men run dictatorships. In the same vein, Helms makes this sweeping claim for his home state:

We are a state that welcomes the world, while at the same time wanting to preserve all that we love, all that makes North Carolina great. We are not an isolationist state. Our first settlers were immigrants, and our exports have always been welcome far beyond our borders.

Is all this true? Yes, North Carolina products have made their way to foreign markets. Throughout the past century, however, prominent North Carolina politicians have been antiwar, isolationist even. Claude Kitchin, the House Majority Leader during the administration of Woodrow Wilson, stood against America's entry into World War I. Robert Reynolds, the state's colorful senator who served from 1933 to 1945, was the only Southern Democrat to oppose consistently the similar plunge into World War II. Most recently, Walter Jones, a Republican lawmaker from eastern North Carolina, made a splash by introducing legislation to begin America's withdrawal from Iraq.

Furthermore, North Carolina politicians have not always welcomed the world to their state. In his day, Reynolds was the Senate's leading opponent of mass immigration. Sam Ervin, the great

conservative Democrat, a man whom Helms counted as a dear friend, was one of the few senators to speak out against the catastrophic 1965 Immigration Act that opened the floodgates to the Third World. Ervin did so in cultural terms, mainly by defending the nation's founding Anglo-Saxon heritage in the face of such sweeping changes. Meanwhile, the indefatigable Jones has taken his own stand against the illegal-alien invasion.

To be sure, when Helms lays out the welcome mat to the world, it has much to do with foreign investment. But he also boasts of the large increase in foreign workers in his home state. Those workers include hundreds of thousands of Spanish-speaking illegal aliens, who bring their alien culture and language with them. Helms likes to joke that when he first went to Washington, he referred to himself, as compared to Sam Ervin, as the state's "liberal senator." Kidding aside, Sam Ervin probably was more conservative than Helms. Both men cherished the U.S. Constitution, but Ervin never viewed North Carolina as an immigrant state, nor did he see any need for a messianic foreign policy.

I don't like to be so critical. In my youth, I volunteered for Helms's 1984 reelection run, plastering my hometown of Asheville with Helms for Senate placards. At the same time, I enjoyed scandalizing my fellow graduate-school students with pro-Helms broadsides. And I fully agree with Sen. Bill Frist's introduction, which claims that Helms will stand out as one of the greatest leaders the U.S. Senate has ever seen. *Here's Where I Stand* is a remarkable achievement; it is as memorable as the author's long career. I should hope that every Republican member of Congress buys and reads a copy of this book. It will teach them that courage and principle can prevail. A politician can take a stand in defense of controversial positions and still win election after election, even in the face of a hostile and unrelenting media. ■

Joe Scotchie is the author, most recently, of Street Corner Conservative: Patrick J. Buchanan and His Times.

[*Joseph Conrad: His Moral Vision*, George A. Panichas, Mercer University Press, 165 pages]

Conrad's Imagination

By Cicero Bruce

IN HIS LATEST critical achievement, George A. Panichas, the longtime editor of *Modern Age*, examines seven novels of Joseph Conrad: *Lord Jim*, *Under Western Eyes*, *Nostromo*, *The Secret Agent*, *Chance*, *Victory*, and *The Rover*. He endeavors to explain Conrad's response in these fictions to man's perpetual struggle against the constraints of the human condition. Panichas illuminates the novels' sympathy for "common mortals" who "must endure," as Conrad put it, "the load of gifts from Heaven: the curse of facts and the blessings of illusions, the bitterness of ... wisdom and the deceptive consolation of ... folly." In fine, Panichas attempts to renew interest in Conrad's moral imagination.

The moral imagination, as Panichas understands it, is the *sine qua non* of a long rhetorical tradition extending from Aristotle and Horace through Sidney and Johnson to the leaders of the New Humanism, Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More. This tradition of moralist critics, including Panichas, holds that literature should instruct as well as delight. Issuing in a unified vision of nature and man's place in it, the moral imagination is the power of ethical perception exercised in poetry and art. Works of the moral imagination fashion forth images of the good, the beautiful, and the honorable; embody the cardinal and supernatural virtues; and give flesh to the seven deadly sins. In brief, they make the unseen seeable. Like the divine natural law, the moral imagination is impressed in the soul by the hand of Providence. But like the soul, which remains submerged in every human being, the individual moral imagination depends for full realization

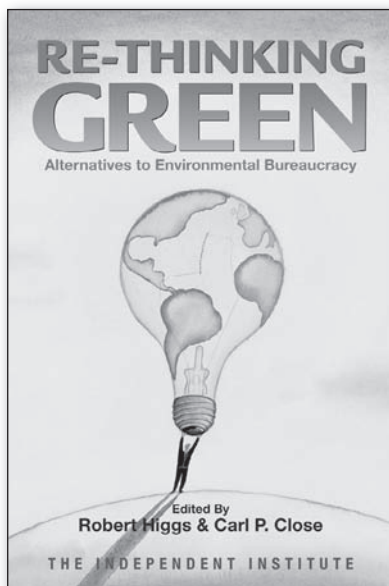
on civilization. Reciprocally, and as surely as the Western culture begins with the *Iliad*, civilization depends for its preservation on the collective moral imagination of civilized individuals.

Panichas sees the moral imagination in contradistinction to the idyllic and diabolic imaginations, which Babbitt and T.S. Eliot have identified and elaborated. Unlike the moral imagination, which espouses creed, custom, and inculcates a sense of obligation to, and respect for, the past, the idyllic imagination ridicules dogma, rejects old manners, and rejoices in defying duty and convention. And while the moral imagination uplifts the soul to a truth that ennobles the human situation, the diabolic searches out the perverse and delights in the subhuman.

In Conrad's fictive meditations on man's fate are to be found, as Panichas shows, some of the most profound insights into the idyllic and diabolic imaginations. The latter is embodied in one Conradian antagonist after another. Take the sinister hotelkeeper in *Victory*, for instance. William Schomberg is a born despiser of the good, which he desires to thwart by any means at his disposal. Like all of Conrad's "devils," Schomberg is "bent on the destruction of life and spirit," writes Panichas, "and of all norms of law and morals." Although Conrad's attitude toward diabolical personages—what Panichas calls "Nietzsche's great despisers"—is unequivocally condemnatory, his delineation of the idyllic imagination is ambiguous, for the idyllic imagination informs the ethical life of the romantic but well-meaning protagonist of *Lord Jim* as much as it determines the radical politics of the menacing Russian revolutionists in *Under Western Eyes*.

This ambiguity notwithstanding, one thing is clear: while Conrad could suffer a young romantic, he had neither patience nor sympathy for idyllic revolutionists, to whom he opposed noble-minded men of prudence and restraint. Conrad judged that in a true revolution, as opposed to a mere dynastic change or an institutional reformation, principled individuals tend naturally to recoil, even

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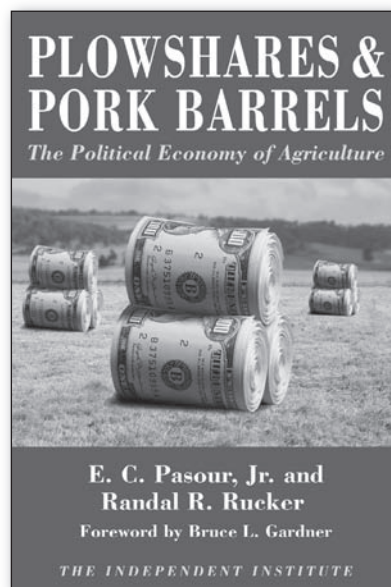
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those whose ideas may have precipitated the revolutionary movement. Honorable men and women are not “the leaders of a revolution,” he maintained. They “are its victims: the victims of disgust, of disenchantment—often of remorse.” For the revolutionary movement, more often than not, “passes away from them and falls into the hands of fanatics and shams,” as Panichas inserts perspicaciously. (For proof of this one need only read *Citizens*, Simon Schama’s important chronicle of the French Revolution.) “Hopes grotesquely betrayed, ideals caricatured—that,” said Conrad, “is the definition of revolution.”

Panichas emphasizes the irreducibility of Conrad’s moral imagination to simplistic or absolute categories. At the same time, however, he represents it as an edifying index of universal human types and tendencies. Conrad may “not manifest an explicitly religious imagination,” Panichas concedes. But just as much as a Dante or a Dostoevsky, he discloses “moral and eternal verities insofar as he ventures beyond the temporal veil in his exploration of the interiors of existence.” At the heart of Conrad’s moral imagination was a belief, says Panichas, “that, in the human soul, good and evil are forever struggling.” For Conrad, this struggle was a permanent reality, as Panichas’s exegesis underscores in its parts and its whole, a reality one might prefer to avoid, or try to sublimate, but one that nobody who has lived long can absolutely deny.

Insights of the kind one derives from reading *Joseph Conrad* will not please the deconstructionist. Nor will they appeal to the new historicists, the intellectual heirs of Marxist ideologue Fredrick Jameson who insist on viewing every literary work as a mere product of its time. For Panichas seeks in Conrad’s fiction a significance understood only in metaphysical or theological terms. Ultimately, he is guilty of “killing time,” to appropriate the phraseology of one of Jameson’s descendents, who, in misreading *Heart of Darkness* as fact rather than an allegory of the soul, charges Conrad with unwittingly

perpetuating the horror of imperialism by locating truths about man in an “atemporal realm.” Indeed, the critical discourse comprising *Joseph Conrad* is chronologically homicidal, insofar as it rejects the relativistic tenets of the new historicism and views history in the light of eternity.

In contrast to the sophists of postmodernism, the author of *Joseph Conrad* “stands,” as the distinguished literary critic Austin Warren has remarked, “for man’s recognition of his dual citizenship in church and state, society visible and invisible, for man’s recognition that all we are we owe; that we do not, and cannot, begin *ab ovo* and *de novo* but are heirs to a great inheritance of tradition and wisdom, represented in the West by our joint indebtedness to the Greek philosophers, the Hebrew prophets, and the Christian saints.” Panichas’s concerns have long been those of a dissident critic working to conserve this inheritance by expounding its formulations in what W.B. Yeats refers to as the “monuments of unaging intellect.”

For nearly half a century Panichas has stood undauntedly against “the deformed ideologies” of “a disordered, fragmented, and uncentered *Zeitgeist*” that have overwhelmed the literary critic and made him a “captive and a conduit of the nihilism that besets society and culture.” In the context of literary studies, Panichas’s has been an ongoing effort to countermand “the hubristic *litterateurs*, who would gladly erase the ‘dignity of man,’ and, concomitantly, the dignity of literature.”

The hubristic *litterateurs* are legion in academia. Under their misguidance, today’s typical college student no longer takes seriously the sapient figures of the past under whose influence Conrad and the greatest of modern authors have written. Instead of being made “at home in the society of the noble dead,” as Paul Elmer More observed, students are routinely dragged “through the slums of sociology.” Moreover, they are told that one kind of experience is as valuable as another when it comes to reading, that one better “relates” to a poem or piece

of fiction when one brings to it one’s personal experience, no matter how provincial. There may be some truth in this, but if students mistake the half-truth for the whole they may fail to see that there is more to reading books than relating to them on a personal level.

One must wonder with Panichas, a latter-day conservator of what is timeless, time-tested, and time-honored, why anybody would continue to promote such self-centered attitudes toward reading in the face of rampant cultural ignorance, when students grow ever less conversant with the seminal works that have shaped the best minds of their ancestors. What students ought to be bringing to literature with the help of their teachers are experiences of a philosophical kind, of the sort Panichas brings to “the country of Joseph Conrad’s moral imagination.” Without some prior experience with Dante or Plato, for example, no one can fully appreciate a classic like Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, which borrows many of its themes and symbols from the former’s *Inferno* and from the latter’s allegory of the cave.

Joseph Conrad affirms that the greatest of writers “awaken us to both human and universal values that too often tend to be hidden or unheeded.” Forgetting such values could have dire consequences with respect to the ethical life. The book’s dedicatee, Panichas’s inspiring friend Russell Kirk, clearly thought so: “A people who have forgotten Homer and Plato and Virgil and Dante and Shakespeare and Cervantes and Johnson presently find themselves in personal and social difficulties.” In truth, they find themselves languishing in a state of ontological decadence; unaware of who, what, and where they are; descending, in Edmund Burke’s words, from the “world of reason, and order, and peace, and virtue, and fruitful penitence into the antagonist world of madness, discord, vice, confusion, and unavailing sorrow.” ■

Cicero Bruce lives with his wife and two children in Abilene, Texas, where he teaches English at McMurry University.

Rumble at the Gray Lady

Judy ... plans to write a book and intends to return to the newsroom, hoping to cover "the same thing I've always covered—threats to our country." If that were to happen, the institution most in danger would be the newspaper in your hands.

—Maureen Dowd, 10/22/05

Whom would you favor in a mud-wrestling match to the finish, Judith Miller or Maureen Dowd? Experts of the sweet science tell me it would be too close to call, like the fight between Alexis and Crystal Carrington.

Personally I think la Dowd might pull it off. Miller has spent too much time taking dictation from the Pentagon and the Iraqi National Congress to be in fighting shape.

Mind you, journalists are notoriously chicken when it comes to brawling. Politicians ditto.

Back in the good old days when Clay Felker was my editor at *Esquire*, the late Jon Bradshaw had the brainstorm to write a lengthy piece about famous journalistic fisticuffs at Elaine's, the Noo Yawk saloon where the ink-stained meet the grease-painted. I was dispatched there by Clay to ensure Bradshaw did not make it all up. (Jon, God rest his soul, had cut his journalistic teeth in England, where most of the news is made up.) Bradshaw tried to get Anthony Haden-Guest to mix it up with Irwin Shaw, a notorious tough guy who had said that, like most upper class Englishmen, Anthony was known to steal from church collection boxes. Haden-Guest begged off, saying that Irwin was over 60 years of age and that it would be an unfair fight. (Only Haden-Guest could come up with that excuse and keep a straight face.) Needless to say, the piece was never written.

Geraldo Rivera, the great Afghanistan hero, once chose to ignore poor little me at Elaine's after announcing in print that the next time I crossed his path he would teach me a lesson I'd not soon forget. (I had written something rude about Puero Ricans.)

One of the very few nice Timesmen I knew, whose name now escapes me, was once thrown out through the window at Elaine's, but the person who threw him out was a woman, although not exactly a lady.

The only hack I know who would rather fight than switch his opinion is Richard Johnson of the *New York Post*. When Joe Conason of the *Village Voice* wrote something rude about Johnson, Richard went downtown, walked into the *Voice* offices, and punched Conason.

GERALDO RIVERA, THE GREAT AFGHANISTAN HERO, ONCE CHOSE TO IGNORE POOR LITTLE ME AT ELAINE'S AFTER ANNOUNCING IN PRINT THAT THE NEXT TIME I CROSSED HIS PATH HE WOULD TEACH ME A LESSON I'D NOT SOON FORGET.

Oh yes, I almost forgot, John Kifner of the *New York Times* once threatened at Elaine's "to wipe the floor with your face." He was addressing yours truly. Like a real Timesman, however, he did nothing but talk, despite Charlie Glass egging him on.

All this was long ago, of course, although Richard Johnson continues to put honor before safety. Three years ago, in a New York nightclub, the "actor" Steven Seagal approached him and told him that if he didn't possess inner peace, he would send Johnson to hospital for a long stay. (Johnson had written something unkind about Seagal's acting ability.) I knew Seagal had been a tough black belt in Aikido in Japan, but I also knew my buddy Johnson. "I'll bet ten

thousand on my friend here," I told Seagal. Stevie baby walked away.

But back to Miller vs. Dowd. Maureen, being Irish-American, will most likely attack first. Judy, like the cerebral Jew that she is, will bob, weave, duck, and play dead. It's anyone's guess after that, but the longer it goes on the more Dowd is favored.

Back in the really good old days, in front of the walls of Troy, Hector fought Achilles while the bleachers went ape. The Greek won hands down. Had George W. done that, gone over to Iraq and challenged Saddam, I'd have been in his corner from day one. Although Saddam is among the dirtiest fighters ever, two referees and an inspection team before hostilities began would ensure a fair fight to the finish. Bush had to be the favorite.

A one-on-one fight has terrific merits. First of all, it's cheaper. And it's very fair. Those who wish to fight can fight and not send others to do the fighting for them or waste whole forests of trees writing about Miller like the *Times* has. Assad Junior looks awfully frail to me, so if Sharon wants to rumble, let him go to Damascus and get it on. He would probably asphyxiate the Syrian to death. Ditto with the ayatollah, although Sharon would not be a favorite against the bearded one. The toughest of all would be the North Korean, a Tae Kwan Do 10th dan, although the last nine dan were honorary.

So, ladies and gentlemen, let's get ready to rumble. In the red corner Judith Miller. In the blue, Maureen Dowd ... ■

America Now Extremely Vulnerable

With current budget deficits so high and increasing we have now become dependent on foreign loans to support our military, to receive tax refunds, and to fund our governments daily operations. Incredible as this sounds, without these loans our government could not pay it's bills and we could be forced to devalue our money.

Many Americans are beginning to recognize how vulnerable we are:

We are facing changing conditions and threats while spreading ourselves dangerously thin. We are trying to manage problems and uncertainties that we may not be able to properly handle as we dismantle our industrial infrastructure, outsource our manufacturing, and try to fight three wars. How can we cope with all of these threats while depending on foreign support for our strength and funding?

- Fighting global wars with a military stretched to the breaking point
- Importing over \$1.25 million more per minute than we export creating a lean on our assets allowing foreign companies to buy and control our major industries (e.g. movies - 69%; cement - 81%; TV manufacturing - 100% foreign owned)
- Borrowing from foreign countries at record amounts to finance our government and military
- Cutting taxes while at the same time under-funding our military
- The constant uncertainty of a terrorist attack on US soil and the economic impact it would have
- Bankrupting major companies that can't compete or selling them to pay for our lifestyle of imports
- Dismantling our industrial base and relying on foreign manufacturing for imports and jobs
- Losing record amounts in internal (budget - \$413 Billion) and external (trade - \$617 Billion) deficits
- Japan's current American currency reserves is \$1 Trillion (from accumulated trade surpluses), they are now capable of buying and controlling any company on our open stock market or predatorily destroying any American industry. Witness the 100% death of TV manufacturing or the withering decline of our auto industry as it relentlessly slides into foreign hands.
- In the last 10 years we have sold 8,600 of our best companies to foreign ownership (e.g. Chrysler, Amoco, Arco Oil)
- We are now faced with the imminent danger of a complete foreign economic takeover

All the while our government repeatedly tell us that as our GDP continues to grow at a healthy pace, that jobs are being created, that unemployment is low, and that we are winning the war on terror. They are also telling us that we should continue to borrow and spend, and not be concerned with the economy, which we are told is excellent and growing.

How can we reconcile these two opposing differences?

We can't of course. GDP is no longer an accurate measure of our sustainable national economic health because it is now driven primarily by debt - personal, government, and trade, and by services rather than production. Foreign ownership and control of our key industries is also distorting the reality of who is benefiting from so-called economic growth. As further evidence of this, jobs are being lost in manufacturing and replaced in service-oriented sectors like retail, healthcare, and government - sectors that don't create value, but merely exchange wealth, which is at the same time being siphoned out of our economy by massive import imbalances with foreign countries.

If our leaders do not recognize reality, how can we hope to plan for the future?

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